RED BIRD

by

WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

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RED BIRD

BOOKS BY WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

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Privately printed

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THE SCANSION OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ALLITERATIVE VERSE
Monographs published by the University of Wisconsin Press, Madison

BYRON AND BYRONISM IN AMERICA
Published by the Columbia University Press, New York

RED BIRD

A DRAMA OF WISCONSIN HISTORY IN FOUR ACTS

BY WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

NEW YORK B. W. HUEBSCH, INC. MCMXXIII

WITHDRAWN
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Leonard, William Ellery Channing. Red Bird. N.Y.Huebsch, 1923. 149p. $1.50.

A four-act play in which the tragic surrender of Red Bird, a legendary character in Wisconsin frontier history, is enacted. Brings into contrast the temperament and particularly the code of life of the Indian and the white man. Characters are impressive and authentic.

812 or 822 23–10549/2

NOTE

"Red Bird" attempts to present, by the symbolism of a dramatic episode in American frontier-history, certain issues of life, in an individual and in a nation, not without their challenge to any time or place. I could wish the little work might be numbered among my poems, in spite of its external prose-form.

The stage business is sketched in only here and there, and very briefly, with free play for the imagination of the reader and for the experience of actor and producer.

THE SCENE: Southwestern Wisconsin.

THE TIME: From spring to summer, almost a hundred years ago.

THE PEOPLE: Red Bird, the Winnebago Chief.
Rabbit Mouth, a middle-aged Winnebago brave.
Yellow Cloud, a young Winnebago brave.
Eagle Beak, an aged Winnebago.
Major William Whistler,[1] Commander of the Garrison at Prairie du Chien.
Mr. Thos. L. McKenney, U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs.
Sergeant Jones, under Major Whistler.
Baxter, a trapper and fur-trader.
François Gagnier, a farmer.
Mignon, his wife.
Annette, their little baby.
The Garrison band, the Bugler, the Standard-bearer, Indians, Soldiers.

[1] The historical Major Whistler was the grandfather of the world-famous painter.

See music snatches at back of book.

RED BIRD

As first presented at Madison by the Curtain Club,
Parkway Theatre, April 27, 1922.

Red Bird	Mr. Ralph Scheinpflug.
Rabbit Mouth . . .	Mr. J. R. Sterrett, Jr.
Yellow Cloud . . .	Mr. Harold Lighty.
Eagle Beak	Mr. B. Q. Morgan.
Major Whistler . .	Mr. Alvin Reis.
Commissioner M'Kenney	Mr. Robert West.
Sergeant Jones . . .	Mr. C. D. Leake.
Baxter	Mr. Norman Bassett.
Gagnier	Mr. A. L. Strout.
Mignon	Miss Beatrice Humiston.

Director	Mr. J. M. O'Neill.
Ass't Director . .	Mr. B. Q. Morgan.
Stage Manager . .	Mr. C. D. Leake.
Business Manager .	Mr. C. L. Fernberg.
Publicity	Mr. E. M. Johnson.
Scenery	Mr. W. H. Varnum and Mr. Frank Riley.

RED BIRD

THE ACTION

Act I The Dalles of the Wisconsin.
The-Place-Where-the-Rocks-Strike-Together, near the Hill of the Dead.
The time of the swelling of the water-courses.

Act II The Bluffs of the Mississippi.
The Maple Woods under Sugar Loaf Bluff, near Prairie du Chien.
The time of the running of the maple sap.

Act III Devil's Lake.
The out-wash plain at the foot of the Lake of the Red-Mountain Shadows.
The time when the corn is in the early blade.

Act IV Fort Crawford.
A room in the guardhouse of the barracks at Prairie du Chien.
The time when the corn is in the tassel.

ACT I

The Dalles of the Wisconsin. The Place-Where-the-Rocks-Strike-Together, near the Hill of the Dead. The time of the swelling of the water-courses.

The village of Red Bird, in sun-checkered shadows, on the Wisconsin River. Oaks and pines. A wigwam. RABBIT MOUTH, *a middle-aged, half-naked brave with a harelip, and three scalp locks in his girdle and three eagle feathers on his head, sits asquat, cleaning his gun-barrel and greasing his flint-lock. In a few moments he lays down his gun, examines his powder-horn, and then empties all the bullets from his pouch. He begins to bite the bullets, contemplating their ragged indentations, and dropping them one by one back into the pouch.* YELLOW CLOUD, *a young brave, likewise half-naked, enters, carrying a knife in his hand, and looks about by the wigwam and the foot of the tree-trunks for something or other.*

YELLOW CLOUD

It's always walking away, it's always hiding from me.

RABBIT MOUTH

You're always nosing around. What's walked away?

YELLOW CLOUD

My sandstone sharpener has walked away.

RABBIT MOUTH

It hasn't walked far away.

YELLOW CLOUD

I climbed to the highest branch of the great pine for it.

RABBIT MOUTH

You can climb.

YELLOW CLOUD

I jumped from the branch to the top of Whitewater Crag for it.

RABBIT MOUTH

You can jump.

YELLOW CLOUD

And I split it off with this knife under its side.

RABBIT MOUTH

And now your knife wants to feel it again?

YELLOW CLOUD

You've taken it.

RABBIT MOUTH

[*Picking it up from where it chanced to be half-concealed on the ground under his girdle and thigh.*] Give it back to your knife. Let your knife feel it well.

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Examining.*] You've spat on it.

RABBIT MOUTH

Your sandstone sharpener was good for my knife.

YELLOW CLOUD

Split one for yourself where the waters are still and shallow in the ravine.

RABBIT MOUTH

I am older. Yours is good.

[YELLOW CLOUD *grunts, squats, and begins sharpening his knife.* RABBIT MOUTH *is again biting his bullets.*

YELLOW CLOUD

What are you biting, Rabbit Mouth?

RABBIT MOUTH

Bullets!

YELLOW CLOUD

Do they taste good?

RABBIT MOUTH

Yes.

YELLOW CLOUD

Like the candy of the white men?

RABBIT MOUTH

Yes, sweeter than the little gum-balls they give us down at the Prairie-Fort, with the beads and the blankets and the looking-glasses, when we bring in the otter and mink skins—Bah!

YELLOW CLOUD

And where the braves of the Pale-Faces march round in blue and gold by the banner of stars on the white pole—Bah! [*Derisively—ominously.*

RABBIT MOUTH

And make music on golden horns and black reeds all together—Bah!

YELLOW CLOUD

And one little moon-face whips his fist to and fro in front of his puff-cheeks like this [*imitating the trombone player*], jerking the sounds back and forth—Bah!

RABBIT MOUTH

While one big chief, with a fur-keg for a war-bonnet, prances ahead and twirls a big stick, with a shining ball on it—Bah!

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Putting a bullet into his mouth.*] But the bullet won't melt on the tongue like the gum-drops, Rabbit Mouth.

RABBIT MOUTH

Don't try to melt it. Bite it. Bite it hard, Yellow Cloud. [*He is pushing out the bullet through his harelip and holding it up in his fingers.*] I've taught you a new war-medicine, Yellow Cloud. I will teach it to all the Winne-

bago. [*Rising.*] And the Council will make me chief in place of Red Bird, the coward. I too am of the Thunderbird clan.

YELLOW CLOUD

But what are the bites for?

RABBIT MOUTH

What for? For the white men. The deeper I bite the white man's bullets, the deeper the white man's bullets will bite the white men. A smooth ball makes a smooth hole—that is not good. A ragged ball makes a ragged hole, tearing long and wide in the breasts of the Long-Knives—that is better.

YELLOW CLOUD

Where did you learn?

RABBIT MOUTH

[*Sitting.*] Down at the Lead Mines when I was digging the shining rock for the Pale-Faces who make the bullets.

YELLOW CLOUD

Did a Pale-Face teach you?

RABBIT MOUTH

Yes.

YELLOW CLOUD

Rabbit Mouth, why do you look so, as if you would kill him with your face?

RABBIT MOUTH

I will kill him—or another. *And* another. Two for one, two for one,—five for one.

YELLOW CLOUD

Did he not teach you a secret—as Gagnier, who boils the sap, taught Red Bird to mix the brown, sandy sugar with the fire-water?

RABBIT MOUTH

He taught me.

YELLOW CLOUD

Rabbit Mouth, take that evil look from your face, for it gives me bad dreams when it gets into my eyes.

RABBIT MOUTH

[*While* YELLOW CLOUD *sharpens his knife.*]

Then turn your eyes from my face! Look down

the river between the rocks till you see the white men's fort.—He taught me. It is he I told my story about in the Council. You were there; I remember how your eyes stared at me.

YELLOW CLOUD

You have told so many stories in the Council about the Men-with-hats.

RABBIT MOUTH

[*Rising.*] Before I came home to the Place-Where-the-Rocks-Strike-Together, before I came back to the Hill of the Dead, I saw a brave who dug in the mines walk up to that man's cabin, asking for fire-water, the white man's milk. The white man was angry because the brave had trampled his corn, hunting rabbits, and stolen a pig—for he was hungry. He struck the brave across the face with his gun-stock, at the door. The brave fell down, drawing his knife. The white man shot him lying in the mud, like a muskrat, and then lifted his rifle at me. And I ran to the diggings—to the burrows that the Pale-Faces stole from our Winnebago fathers. But at night I crawled up where he still lay under a well-sweep and carried him off, for he was a Winne-

bago. This is the story I told and your eyes stared. But my secret I did not tell. Listen. I found his side torn open and in the outer skin at the back end of the wound I got the bullet. It was jagged like this [*holding up a bullet between thumb and forefinger*]. But I have bitten deeper. *Two* for one! [*with ugly derision.*

YELLOW CLOUD

Two for one, two for one?—You have already three for one [*pointing to the three scalps at* RABBIT MOUTH'S *waist*]—the gray scalp of old Methode, the mender of pans, and the brown scalps of his two sons.

RABBIT MOUTH

Today the law of the Winnebago says two for one. In old times it said five for one. I am not as Red Bird, the traitor. I live in the times of our fathers. I will have five for one.—I have bitten deeper.

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Jumping up.*] I will bite too.—Won't Red Bird bite?

RABBIT MOUTH

Won't Red Bird bite! [*Sits.*

YELLOW CLOUD

Make Red Bird bite. [*Sits.*

[EAGLE BEAK *enters, an aged Indian, in a blanket, on his breast a medal that hangs by a cord from his neck. He sits down, silent and apart, observing the two braves preparing their weapons.*

RABBIT MOUTH

Red Bird, the traitor, loves the white man. Red Bird, the coward, will not take meat, with the round bullet or the jagged bullet, with the tomahawk or with the knife. You have heard him say: "Smoke the peace-pipe at the Lead Mines in the hills to the south; smoke the peace-pipe at the Fort between the rivers in the west; smoke the peace-pipe even here where the rocks strike together!" Here in the narrow waters under the pines by the Winnebago Crags and the Canyons! Here where the bones of five hundred of our forefathers are piled one on another in the Hill of the Dead!—Smoke the peace-pipe! I will taunt him to his teeth!

EAGLE BEAK

He says smoke the peace-pipe. . . . He says well.

YELLOW CLOUD

He thinks the white warriors are too strong. He hears the music of their drums and their horns in the four winds and he counts their braided caps as the leaves of the forest.

EAGLE BEAK

Red Bird is now going through the village, from lodge to lodge, saying, "Smoke the peace-pipe."

RABBIT MOUTH

He has been listening to you. And he wants the fire-water for his throat and he wants the bright round medal for his chest—like you, Eagle Beak. He's not a chief. He's an old woman.

EAGLE BEAK

[*Standing and toying with his medal.*] No. He does not want this medal for his chest. He knows it is only for the Indian who is old. I count three times the winters of Red Bird. See,

—the face of the first white father, the big Medicine Man Washington, who lived long ago at the place of the rising sun—a face old and wise like my own, so the white men have said.

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Standing.*] Red Bird still says we should never break the pact of peace. [RED BIRD *enters in the feathered head-dress, shirt, leggins, and moccasins of a chief,*[1] *with a peace-pipe in his hand. He is somewhat under forty years.*

RED BIRD

Yes, as Red Bird, chief of the Winnebago, I have come to your wigwam to say that we should not break the pact of peace.—Smoke the peace-pipe. [*He holds up the pipe.*

RABBIT MOUTH

[*With muffled derision.*] Bah!

RED BIRD

Too many lodges are cleaning the flint-locks and grinding the knives.

[1] Not, of course, the same suit as that he wears in the third act.

RABBIT MOUTH

Have we not become the white men's dogs? Would you be a chief over dogs?—Or are you Eagle Beak's papoose?

RED BIRD

Red Bird has promised that the tribe at the Hill of the Dead would keep the bullets for the heart of the black bear in the honey-tree and the knives for the skins of the red deer at the river.

RABBIT MOUTH

Red Bird will not tear the cross he scratched at the bottom of the treaty-skin? Red Bird will not break the pact he made at Prairie du Chien with the men in blue and gold?

RED BIRD

I will not.

RABBIT MOUTH

Is the chief afraid?

RED BIRD

I am not afraid. I am proud. I have given the word of Red Bird.

YELLOW CLOUD

You only made two scratches with the quill feather of a white man's goose.

RABBIT MOUTH

And any white squaw's hen down at the Prairie can make better scratches, when she clucks for her chickens. [*Rising.*] You are proud! Behind your proud back the braves now call you "old woman."

RED BIRD

They do not. They shall not. [*As* RED BIRD, *goaded and suddenly swift, seems about to make threateningly for* RABBIT MOUTH, *old* EAGLE BEAK *would hold him back.*

EAGLE BEAK

No, no. It is well not to fight the Long-Knives. It is well too not to fight your brothers. Five hundred are yonder in the Hill of the Dead. —Let Rabbit Mouth blow his envy from out his lips. You know how to stand, like a tree in the wind.

RED BIRD

[*Proudly regaining his poise.*] Yes. I can

stand against the taunts of Rabbit Mouth! I care as little for the arrows of his speech as a captive chief of our ancestors cared for the flames and the Chippewa's arrows of fire. . . . The scratches were made by the goose. The word was made by Red Bird. I thought nothing about the goose feather. That was the white father's way. I thought about my word. [*He stands with forearms and wrists crossed over the belly, looking up and off.*

EAGLE BEAK

The men in blue and gold know of the cleaning of the rifles and the sharpening of the knives; and a new band has been summoned up the Big River in a long boat, and another will be coming afoot across the wide hills from east of north.

RABBIT MOUTH

[*Sits.*] We know it! Let them come! Let them come!

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Pointing at the adornment of his chest.*] And you want a new medal from the Men-with-hats for binding our arms behind our backs with fear of the Pale-Faces.

EAGLE BEAK

[*To* YELLOW CLOUD.] The young braves yearn for the scalps that give them the ancient right to wear the eagle feather on the head [*pointing at* RABBIT MOUTH] or the skunk-skin at the heel. They care not if the Hill of the Dead is made big again with the bones of the old men and the papooses and the squaws.

YELLOW CLOUD

You too were once young.

EAGLE BEAK

But now I am old,—very old.

YELLOW CLOUD

And as a young brave, they say, you wore the eagle feathers.

RED BIRD

He won them, where Red Bird has won them, where Rabbit Mouth never won his—with the scalps of the Chippewa.

RABBIT MOUTH

But he now wears the big medal.

YELLOW CLOUD

And will Red Bird some day wear the big medal? [RED BIRD *advances threateningly toward him.*] Rabbit Mouth said it.

RABBIT MOUTH

Bah! [*To himself, sputtering through his harelip.*] S—s—s! [EAGLE BEAK *thinks he must again interpose.*

RED BIRD

No, Eagle Beak. Rabbit Mouth has been bitten by a rattlesnake. Let him hiss. He needs no bullets and no knife—his face alone makes the white men run, when they see him.

[*Guffaws from* EAGLE BEAK *and* YELLOW CLOUD.

RABBIT MOUTH

[*Jumping up.*] Yes, but they never run from yours! In the melting snows of the year before you made the two scratches, you went down with a hundred braves from here where the rocks strike together and across the long ridge toward the Lead Mines that the Pale-Faces stole from

the Winnebago. The Council said you were to take meat. Bah!

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Advancing.*] But you led us from trail to trail through the woods, by the white sands of the lake shores, along the frozen swamps between the low hills, and out into the sunny oak-openings under the wild-violet sky of spring,—but never by the smoke of a cabin, and never by the camp-fires of the traders, and never to the burrows of the Pale-Face diggers.

RABBIT MOUTH

And we returned from the warpath without one scalp, like squaws returning from the hoeing before the corn is in the tassel.

EAGLE BEAK

It was well.

RABBIT MOUTH

Bah! We took meat! Meat of fish from the streams and meat of elk from the thickets. No white meat, not one scalp of gray hair, or brown hair, or hair red like the squash. And the braves

jeered us when we returned. And you! You crossed your wrists over your belly and looked through a hole in the sky. [*Mocking* Red Bird's *characteristic pose.*

RED BIRD

I had spoken in the Council against the war-party.

RABBIT MOUTH

But they taunted you and you went forth.

RED BIRD

I went forth. I was not afraid.

RABBIT MOUTH

Red Bird, the village at the Hill of the Dead, and all the villages round about, and the Menomonee and the Dacotahs, know how cunningly you kept far from the dwelling-places and the hunting-grounds of the Long-Knives. Yet you still walk hither and thither in the dress of a chief. But I am, like you, born of the clan of the Thunderbird.

RED BIRD

Yes, born of the Thunderbird clan, else I

would close your teeth with pitch. I was not afraid. Could I whistle the white men out of the hummocks of the woodchucks, or out of the tree-tops of the squirrels?

YELLOW CLOUD

That is so, Rabbit Mouth.

RABBIT MOUTH

Then show the braves that you are not afraid. Take your gun and your knife down to the Prairie. There is enough meat down yonder between Sugar Loaf Bluff and the Fort. If you must wait, wait till the dark of the moon—but go down. Prairie du Chien is full of meat, [*Walks away.*

RED BIRD

No. Wait till the corn is in the tassel.

YELLOW CLOUD

Wait till the Long-Knives in blue and gold have hanged old Blue Heron, the hostage, on a tall war-pole, because Rabbit Mouth has scalped Methode and his two sons?

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RED BIRD

Yellow Cloud, of the Buffalo Sib, I have said Rabbit Mouth should go down to the Fort and give himself to the Men-with-hats that Blue Heron should be free.

YELLOW CLOUD

Would you go?

RED BIRD

Yes, I would go, Yellow Cloud.

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Convinced.*] Yes, you would go.

EAGLE BEAK

Yes, he would go, Rabbit Mouth.

RABBIT MOUTH

Well, I won't go! I will die by a white man's bullet in my heart, not by a white man's rope around my neck.

EAGLE BEAK

But you would let Blue Heron die by a white man's rope around his neck.

RABBIT MOUTH

I will lead a war-party to rescue Blue Heron.

EAGLE BEAK

The gates of the Fort are strong.

YELLOW CLOUD

And the walls are laid where the white men dug up the bones of the Winnebago.

RED BIRD

Wait till the corn is in the tassel. I speak for my people and for my word. The new white father of the men in blue and gold will be just and protect the children of the forests and the water-courses. He has said it. He will wait till the corn is in the tassel before he gives Blue Heron to be hanged—and then he will wait again.

YELLOW CLOUD

What would you do if he should not wait?

RED BIRD

My young brave, I have looked into his eyes. I have held his right hand. He will wait—and then he will wait again.

YELLOW CLOUD

But what would you do if he gave Blue Heron to be hanged?

RED BIRD

He will keep Blue Heron till the squaws and the old men [*with a look at* EAGLE BEAK] in the village make Rabbit Mouth go down to the Fort and stand at the gate—but he will not put a rope around the neck of Blue Heron.

YELLOW CLOUD

But if he did, would you still say, "Smoke the peace-pipe?"

RED BIRD

If Major Whistler, the new white father at Prairie du Chien, gave Blue Heron to be hanged, I would not longer say, "Smoke the peace-pipe." I would unbind the war-pipe from my breast—but he will not.

YELLOW CLOUD

Yes, I know you would unbind the war-pipe. Would he not, Eagle Beak?

EAGLE BEAK

I fear that he would.

YELLOW CLOUD

He would, Rabbit Mouth.

RABBIT MOUTH

[*To* Red Bird.] You won't go down to the Prairie to take meat?

RED BIRD

No, I gave the word of a chief to a chief. Let me hear no more.

RABBIT MOUTH

Old woman!

RED BIRD

[*With resentment burning its way through his self-possession.*] Red Bird an old woman!—While you skulk in the rocks and let Blue Heron take your place in prison and perhaps in irons! [*With heightened passion and eloquent abandonment of his deliberate speech and action.*] You dog! I'll make you tuck your tail between your hopping legs! [*He seizes suddenly the knife from* Yellow Cloud.

[RABBIT MOUTH *is cowed but ugly; a bloody fight threatens.* GAGNIER *and* BAXTER *enter.* GAGNIER *is a bearded, simple, kindly, not uncouth American farmer of French stock, clad for the trail, but carrying only a gun and a powder-horn, and two pouches, one for bullets, the other for a saint's relic.* BAXTER, *likewise bearded, is a boisterous, reckless, self-confident, gun-bearing Britisher originally from Scotland, with a lowland brogue and broad Scotch phrases, used with unction. He has on the complete hunter's outfit of the period: a smoke-tanned buckskin hunting shirt, trimmed leggins of the same material, a wolf-skin chapeau with the animal's tail still attached, and moccasins of elk-hide; a powder-horn slung on a strap over his shoulder, a buckled belt with sheath-knife, two pistols, a short-handled axe, and a bullet-pouch of mink-skin. The quarrel subsides in surprise and curiosity.*

BAXTER

Weel noo, it's too bad to break in on sic a

canty, happy, sylvan hame, without even our visitin' cartes.

RED BIRD

[*Advancing and offering his hand.*] Mr. Gagnier, the flap of my wigwam is open; and the kettle is boiling at the tree. How is papoose after her splash in the Big River?

GAGNIER

Plump and red as a pippin!—Baxter, Red Bird pulled my little Annette out of the Mississippi last fall.

BAXTER

Ye look as if ye micht do that.

RED BIRD

The kettle is boiling—come, both.

BAXTER

We're here for something bigger than a kettle, Red Bird.

GAGNIER

We must have a canoe for Prairie du Chien.

RED BIRD

Did you lose your canoe in the rapids?

GAGNIER

No. I've been up afoot to Fort Winnebago with maple sugar—by the river-trail. The water was so high. There I fell in with this old friend from Detroit—call him Baxter. He coaxed me to go with him to Devil's Lake after panthers.

YELLOW CLOUD

Where are the panthers?

BAXTER

Gagnier wadna gie me time to shoot ony.

RED BIRD

[*Absently.*] Devil's Lake. [*To* GAGNIER.] You shall have my canoe tomorrow.

GAGNIER

No, I must have the canoe this afternoon, Red Bird. We won't stop. I must see my woman. I must see my baby.

RED BIRD

You shall have my canoe this afternoon.

GAGNIER

[*Thanking with a hand-shake.*] Some red brother at the Fort will paddle it back.

YELLOW CLOUD

Yes. The Blue Heron will paddle it back —under the moon, when the spirits hoot from bluff to bluff, with his head in a rope.

BAXTER

What's that?—with his head in a rope?

RED BIRD

Rabbit Mouth can tell you about Blue Heron.

EAGLE BEAK

But he won't.

RED BIRD

Or Mr. Gagnier.

GAGNIER

[*In a voice of somewhat timid remonstrance.*] Blue Heron was still a prisoner in the guardhouse at Prairie du Chien when I left, Rabbit Mouth.

BAXTER

One of Uncle Sam's caged birds, eh? A fellow of some importance, I'd say—from the size of your talk.

RED BIRD

[*With dignity.*] We were talking about him when you came. I won't talk about him now. —[*Mysteriously.*] Mr. Gagnier, what the white men call Devil's Lake—the Lake of the Red-Mountain Shadows—Mr. Gagnier, did you see the tomahawk above the Lake of the Red-Mountain Shadows—the great rock of the legend, the stone tomahawk of the Winnebago?

GAGNIER

No, I have never heard you tell of this great stone tomahawk.

BAXTER

Tell us aboot it noo. Tell us an Indian legend, Red Bird. I hae a sma' boy at Green Bay wha likes 'em better even than the Seven League Boots or Tam o' Shanter's Ride.

RED BIRD

When I was a little boy and the braves were

on the warpath against the Chippewa, my grandmother told me legends of our people—in the night-time before the lodge by the fire. The small boys of the white men cannot understand them. They were not meant for the children of the Long-Knives.

BAXTER

A sma' boy is a sma' boy. My Bobbie himsel' tumbles roun' with the little red rascals after school. Let's hae the story.

GAGNIER

You are a famous teller of stories, Red Bird. You can talk. Talk to Baxter as you talked to Major Whistler at the grand pow-wow. All the white men and all the red men sat so still.

RED BIRD

I will talk of the story of the Great Tomahawk. For sometime you can look, Mr. Gagnier. You can tell me, Mr. Gagnier. I shall myself never go again to the Lake of the Red-Mountain Shadows—while I live.

GAGNIER

[*A little startled, as if in reminiscence.*] Why not? Why not?

RED BIRD

I have dreamed a dream.

YELLOW CLOUD

Tell the dream.

RED BIRD

No. I will never tell the dream.—I will tell the story.

EAGLE BEAK

No. I will tell it.

RED BIRD

You shall not. I can talk better than you.

EAGLE BEAK

I have talked longer than you. I will speak first.

RED BIRD

You shall not tell the story of the Great Tomahawk.

EAGLE BEAK

Then I will tell the story of the Great Serpent. The Great Serpent came down . . .

RED BIRD

No!

YELLOW CLOUD

No! I've heard it a hundred times.

RABBIT MOUTH

Every papoose in the village has heard it a hundred times.

BAXTER

Weel, I hae never heard it. Here—here are twa pebbles, a big ane and a little ane. I'll shake 'em in my wolf-skin bonnet. Ye stick your han' in, Eagle Beak, and if ye grab the big ane, you're to tell us first aboot the Great Serpent.

[EAGLE BEAK *draws the big pebble and holds it up with pride.*

BAXTER

Of course. Noo, "The Great Serpent came down . . ." Ga ahead.

EAGLE BEAK

[*Complacently to the white visitors.*] The Great Serpent came down from the northern forests across the lands. He wriggled on his belly a long ways, and tore open the earth underneath as he crawled. This made the bed of the Wisconsin. Sometimes he slipped along over the rocks. This made the places of the waterfalls and rapids. Sometimes he rested. That made the sandbars. And all the little serpents fled when they saw him coming and that made the places where the brooks and the little rivers flow into the Wisconsin. But once he came to great rocks that he could not pass. He was very angry and he rent the rocks asunder, but not farther asunder than the width of his belly. And that made the Place-Where-the-Rocks-Strike-Together, these narrow waters here by the Hill of the Dead.

GAGNIER

We white folks like your stories, Eagle Beak. Now Red Bird will tell his.

EAGLE BEAK

Yes, Red Bird has the little pebble.

[*They all prepare themselves to listen,—at*

last even RABBIT MOUTH, *the morose—sitting or standing in diverse postures.* RED BIRD *stands, the Indian dreamer and orator.*

RED BIRD

Long, long winters ago, before ever the showers of stars fell from the autumn skies, the Winnebago fought there on the mountain-tops with the Giants, the Strong Men, who came riding on the Northern Lights to devour the animal mounds of the bear and the panther and the deer beside the pool below. But the Winnebago were then a mightier race than now. They were then in their deeds, as they are now only in their name—the people of the parent speech, from whom even the Dacotahs learned to use words. They then took not two scalps for one; they then took five for one.

RABBIT MOUTH

Yes, five for one.

RED BIRD

So they compelled the Strong Men to smoke the peace-pipe. And the Strong Men buried the

hatchet in the mountain-top and swore never to return until the hatchet should rise out of the mountain. And they vanished away on the whirling snow-drifts. But, after the years when the showers of stars began falling from the autumn skies, the water-monsters of the pool began quarreling with one another, and so the Thunderbirds came to punish them. The flapping of their huge wings is the thunder. The opening and shutting of their huge eyes is the lightning-flash. The dropping of their eggs is the thunderbolt. And they shattered the mountain; and the hatchet stood out on the ledge against all the skies. There it stands while the rocks tumble down the steep places and strange voices die away in the splintered bluffs, and the waters below grow dark before the setting of the sun.

BAXTER

My little shaver wull like that. Did the Strong Men return?

EAGLE BEAK

The handle is still deep in the red side of the mountain, and a tomahawk flies forth only when the handle is free in the fist. The Strong Men do not return, for the tomahawk is still buried.

RED BIRD

O I wish I knew that. Mr. Gagnier, when you return to the Lake of the Red-Mountain Shadows, will you look? I will not go—while I live. I have dreamed a dream. [*He looks off into the upper spaces.*

GAGNIER

I will look; but I do not like the place either, Red Bird. [*He fingers nervously in his pouch and pulls out a little bone.*

BAXTER

That precious bane, eh? Ye're feeling of your lucky bane, agen, in your pock-nook, eh? Hoot mon, what are ye feared of—the panthers and the rattlesnakes, or the unco Strong Men or the Spooks?

YELLOW CLOUD

Let me see it! A finger-bone of a man! A finger-bone of a Winnebago!

GAGNIER

[*To* Yellow Cloud.] No, no. [*To* Baxter.] I didn't know I took it out.

[Rabbit Mouth *starts up, advancing, unnoticed, with suspicious, greedy eyes.*

BAXTER

[*Reckless of any trouble brewing.*] How ye did cleek and clutch it—like a laddie in the inglenook with his first penny-whustle—up there between the eery craigs by the fire last nicht, while the eldritch howlets began too-whooing like the damned in hell when Auld Nick tweaks their lugs!

GAGNIER

I knew they were owls—but—they might not have been.

RED BIRD

Rabbit Mouth, sit back. Mr. Gagnier is the best friend of the Winnebago from the Prairie to the Portage.

RABBIT MOUTH

It is the finger of a man—what man?

YELLOW CLOUD

It is the finger of a Winnebago!

BAXTER

Ye'd better tell a legend yoursel', Gagnier—and be quick and clever aboot it.

GAGNIER

[*Between sudden fear of the Indians' suspicions and* BAXTER'S *raillery.*] It's not a war-trophy. I am no brave. It's a charm—a saint's relic—it keeps me safe against small-pox and ague and the knife of an enemy.

RABBIT MOUTH

Against the knife of an enemy? Let me hold it.

GAGNIER

No, no. [*He puts the relic back into the pouch.*] Besides, it wouldn't help you anyway. You have to be a Christian.

RED BIRD

Where did you find it?

GAGNIER

Father Chatillon gave it to me.

YELLOW CLOUD

He is a witch-doctor. I know. One night Black Sambo, the slave, and myself peeked through a chink in the logs where the light made a yellow line. There he was, sitting before a table. On the table was a candle and a Bible—open—and a board with little squares, black and red. On the squares, he was moving back and forth ugly dwarf-men with crowns, and little horses, and little hitching posts. One band was white; the other was red. Black Sambo said they were black, but they were red. And, as he looked again and again in his Bible, the little white men at last killed all the little red men. He was making bad medicine against the Winnebago with his Bible.

RABBIT MOUTH

He shall not make it much longer.

BAXTER

[*Laughing.*] My observing frien', the puir lane auld Black Gown, as ye call 'em, was simply amusin' himsel' between prayers. Yours is a pretty good description for a beginner of the game we white fellows ca' chess. Father Chatillon

was teachin' himsel' chess. Besides Sambo was richt—the little men maun been black.

YELLOW CLOUD

I know they were red.

BAXTER

Ye boys 'll believe onything—ye are children.

GAGNIER

Yes, Major Whistler told me how some of you've been spreading a story through the tribes that he tried to poison the Indians down at the Fort at the pow-wow. But your belly-aches and pukings were only your own gluttony.

BAXTER

But for a' that, Uncle Sam feeds ye vera ill—the upstart, swaggerin' pinchgut!

GAGNIER

It wasn't even the whiskey, for they refused you fire-water. And they didn't refuse on account of being just stingy either, because they staved in a keg and let your white father's milk run out on the grass.

EAGLE BEAK

That was very terrible to see. There was enough whiskey to have kept me drunk till the end of my days.

RABBIT MOUTH

I believe the little men were red, and I believe they put their rat-medicine in the black soup.

YELLOW CLOUD

And they wanted to mock us by spilling the fire-water.

BAXTER

That's Uncle Sam's way. Ye hear, Uncle Sam's way,—your dear Uncle Sam wha stole the land and the fur-trade from kind, guid, Johnnie Bull.

GAGNIER

As John Bull stole them from the Frenchman.

RED BIRD

And as long ago the Frenchman stole them from the Indians, Mr. Gagnier.

BAXTER

In the guid auld days your British Uncle, John Bull—my uncle, too, lads—he gave ye plenty of that sort of milk; and didna cut the blankets in twain either. [*Singing.*

But Uncle Sam is tight as a clam
Being a first-rate business man.

De'il tak him, I say, for his pert goatee and his close fist.

YELLOW CLOUD

Sing us another song.

BAXTER

Oh, anither?—weel—! [*Striking a comic pose.*

Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me?

YELLOW CLOUD

Another one!

BAXTER

An' anither, ye say?—[*Recollecting a bit and then striking another pose.*] Weel—

As I walked out by the light of the moon,
'Twas there I spied a big racoon,
A-settin' on a rail!

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Attempting to imitate the melody of the last line.*

A-settin' on a rail—

Do it again.

BAXTER

As I walked out by . . .

GAGNIER

Come, Baxter, for the love of Saint Francis, won't you come? Don't begin your singing here. I must get home to my woman and little girl. Red Bird, I'll take good care that your canoe comes back.

RED BIRD

You won't sleep in my lodge tonight?

GAGNIER

No. I want to get down through the narrows and well on the flatlands by moonrise.

RED BIRD

[*Pointing to the river bank.*] My canoe is over yonder in the reeds at the foot of the dell.

YELLOW CLOUD

The Blue Heron will paddle the canoe back, with a rope's end dangling from his neck in the rushing of the waters.

BAXTER

Gagnier, was this Blue Heron wha always has a rape on his neck-bane ony frien' of yours?

GAGNIER

No; not a friend of mine—hostage for Rabbit Mouth. [*With a half-rebuking look at the Indian.*

EAGLE BEAK

Yellow Cloud thinks the white father will hang him.

YELLOW CLOUD

He will.

BAXTER

[*With an air of reflective deliberation and sud-*

den emphasis.] Blue Heron?—Blue Heron?—Why lads, I min' me it's this Blue Heron the garrison was telling aboot up north at Green Bay.

RED BIRD

What did they tell, Mr.—a—Mr.—a—[*He turns to* GAGNIER.

GAGNIER

Baxter, Red Bird.

RED BIRD

Mr. Baxter, what did they tell?

BAXTER

That Uncle Sam hanged him nigh twa guid weeks ago. [*He starts toward the river.*

RED BIRD

Major Whistler—hanged—Blue Heron?

BAXTER

They stretched his neck in a widdie and dangled his taes in the air under a cross-beam—that's ca'd hangin', isn't it? [*To* GAGNIER.] Didn't ye ken?—Get in—I'll shove off. I thocht ye were in a hurry.

GAGNIER

I'm sorry for this, Rabbit Mouth. Red Bird, good-bye.

RED BIRD

[*Calling after.*] The white father hanged Blue Heron?

BAXTER

[*Farther down the river.*] Your Uncle Sam hanged him, he did. [*Singing, as his voice fades farther and farther into the distance.*]

They hanged him on the gallows,
Beside the silver sallows,
And the corbies—are pecking out his eyne.

[*Repeating.*]

And the corbies—are pecking out his eyne.

RED BIRD

[*At the tree, trying to think, to himself.*] The new white father has given Blue Heron to be hanged.

RABBIT MOUTH

[*Jeering at* Red Bird.] Huh! Huh!

YELLOW CLOUD

[*Jeering at* Red Bird.] Huh! Huh!

Rabbit Mouth *and* Yellow Cloud *start to run to the river.* Red Bird *checks* Rabbit Mouth, *and* Yellow Cloud *halts.*

RED BIRD

Wait—wait—not yet! We shall repay, two for one.

RABBIT MOUTH

Wait till the corn is in the tassel! [*He breaks into the Winnebago war-dance with his gun, chanting.*

Black your faces! Gash your arms!
Black your faces! Gash your arms!

[Yellow Cloud, *with his knife, joins in the wail and the dance. Glaring at each other, forward and back and forward and back they stamp and shuffle in barbaric time, emphasizing the rhythm with jerk of shoulders, with out-thrust of elbows, with brandish of gun and knife, and with the shrick of the words.* Red Bird *stands*

silently at the tree, with wrists and forearms crossed over the belly, looking out into the great spaces and the unknown future.

Black your faces! Gash your arms!
Black your faces! Gash your arms!

[*And so over and over they lash themselves into the tribal frenzy.*]

Black your faces!—

RABBIT MOUTH

[*Turning suddenly to* Red Bird.] Old woman, old woman!—Wait till the corn is in the tassel!

RED BIRD

[*Stepping forward.*] No! Black your faces, for Blue Heron is hanged by a rope on his neck; but gash your arms not now, for you will need all your blood and must see straight over your gun-barrels. [*He picks up the rag with which* Rabbit Mouth *had been cleaning his rifle.*] See! Here is the peace-pact! See!—Here are the two scratches of Red Bird. [*He tears and tramples underfoot.*] See! [*with fingers to his lips*]—

Here is my word to the white father. I send it into the storm-wind—[*with hand sweeping up and out from his lips*]—and the storm-wind shall send it to the shooting stars and the fire of the stars shall burn it to ashes.

EAGLE BEAK

I am older, I—

RED BIRD

No, Eagle Beak, I spit on the white man's medal. Yellow Cloud of the Buffalo Sib, summon the braves to the Council Lodge tonight. We will send brothers to our villages under the four skies. They have greased their flint-locks. They have sharpened their knives. They have waited for me. I am ready. Eagle Beak has told you there will be a boat of the men in blue and gold coming up the Big River. We will choose the braves that shall take tomorrow the trail to the boat. The rest shall be gathered from all the rivers, all the lakes, at the Hill of the Dead in their war-paint, by the night of my return. Go, Yellow Cloud.

[YELLOW CLOUD *goes.*

RABBIT MOUTH

By the night of your return?

RED BIRD

Yes, I will be at the Council. I will await the coming back of the messengers from the villages till I look upon the wampum belts they bring in—smeared with red. The Menomonee and the Dacotahs will be coming too! Then I shall go forth—alone—and I shall return before the seeds are in the corn-hills.

EAGLE BEAK

Alone?

RED BIRD

They have killed Blue Heron. They have killed Blue Heron! The law of the Winnebago is two for one, two for one. Who am I? I am Red Bird, of the Sib of the Thunderbird, whence are the chiefs of the Winnebago from the years long before the shooting stars. [*He holds his knife high in air, and with pulsing breath half chants in a trance-like exaltation.*] I will find my two. My beloved two I shall find—down at

the mouth of our river that is flowing—flowing—flowing—past the Hill of the Dead. Two for one! I shall find them, my own, my two, and bring back the two scalp-locks for one to the gathering of the bands.

EAGLE BEAK

The men in blue and gold will come and give to every village the name of the Hill of the Dead. [*He strides slowly away.*

RABBIT MOUTH

I will go with you.

RED BIRD

To see that Red Bird is not an old woman?

RABBIT MOUTH

To find my own two heads. I will have five for one.

RED BIRD

The old law!

RABBIT MOUTH

[*With hand to his three eagle feathers.*] Yet two to sleep by three.

ACT II

The Bluffs of the Mississippi. The Maple Woods under Sugar Loaf Bluff, near Prairie du Chien. The time of the running of the maple sap.

GAGNIER'S *farm. Among the maples beyond the pasture. Over an outdoor fire a kettle in which* GAGNIER *is stirring the sap with a heavy pewter spoon. A bucket under a tap in a tree.* BAXTER *is seated comfortably on the ground, without his hunting kit, which has evidently been stowed in* GAGNIER'S *cabin.*

BAXTER

[*Singing.*

Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And auld lang syne?

[GAGNIER *is lifting and tilting the spoon, and watching the drip of the liquid.*

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld . . .

GAGNIER

Baxter, would you mind bringing me that bucket—I must keep stirring. I must be done by dark!

BAXTER

[*Getting up with lazy deliberation.*] Weel, I suppose I maun keep stirrin', mysel'. I thocht ye had me here for a rest. [*Singing.*]

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup of kindness yet
For auld . . .

GAGNIER

Pour till I tell you to stop, please.

BAXTER

[*Singing as he gives the bucket a careless tip.*

We'll tak a cup of kindness yet
For auld . . .

GAGNIER

[*With his hand trying to stay* BAXTER'S *arm at the bucket.*] Stop! Jesu Maria, stop!

BAXTER

[*Completes the chorus, as he sets the bucket down.*]

For auld lang syne—

Weel, I'll stop.

[BAXTER *reseats himself and* GAGNIER *hurriedly replaces the bucket under the tap.*

GAGNIER

[*Trying the liquid with his spoon.*] You don't know no more about maple sugar than Mignon did, when I brought her down from Detroit where she used to scour the Captain's silver. I had set some to boil on the hearth at the cabin in a wash-kettle early one morning, and when I got back from milking the cow, she had put the sheets and my shirts to soak in it. I said: "Mignon, Mignon, if you had been a man, you would have shaved with it."

BAXTER

And I suppose ye said it without screamin'

"Jesu Maria." [*As if with a grievance.*] Ye hae hurt my feelins. I'll sing agen, nevermair.

[MIGNON *enters, a thin, angular young woman, with a friendly face that shows the marks of menial tasks and of the hard frontier life. She carries the baby under an arm in a blanket, and a big basket in her hand.*

GAGNIER

[*As his wife sets the basket down and lays the baby carefully on the ground.*] Well, Mignon has something to make you sing again. [*To* MIGNON.] You brought the whiskey, Mignon?

MIGNON

Oui, François, and the bread and cheese and the pans. [*She empties the basket and hands her husband the flask.*

GAGNIER

Give the whiskey to Baxter, Mignon.

BAXTER

Your health, Madame Mignon; ye're a braw, sonsie lassie.

MIGNON

[*With an awkward courtesy.*] Merci, merci, Monsieur Baxter. [BAXTER *is handing the flask to* GAGNIER. MIGNON *goes to the baby.*

GAGNIER

No. Set it down. I'm drinking maple sap. [*As he tastes.*] You don't always sing at the right time. Up at the Indian village, last week, if I hadn't dragged you away, Red Bird's braves would have made you sing all night.

BAXTER

I wull sing agen, nevermair.

GAGNIER

And it was very foolish for you to have sung that song about the gallows—about the hanging.

BAXTER

What do ye think those red lads could understan' of that auld Scots sang? [*Singing.*

They hanged him on the gallows,
Beside the silver sallows,
And the corbies—are pecking out his eyne.
And the corbies are pecking out his eyne.

What do your Winnebago ken about "silver sallows" and "corbies"?—Ye dinna understan' the words yoursel'.

GAGNIER

I understand "gallows" and "hanging" and Red Bird understands "gallows" and "hanging."

BAXTER

They hae lugs only for the music. They like the swing, the canter of the tune. It makes them hop, like whuskey.

GAGNIER

They have ears just now for all the gossip of the white men they can pick up at the fort [*pointing with the spoon toward the Prairie*], and all that finds its way into the forests.

BAXTER

[*With his mouth full of bread and cheese.*] O I ken Indians. I hae kenned mair red lads than ye can count stanes in your cabin chimlie. I hae hunted wi' 'em, traded wi' 'em, sung to 'em, jigged and danced wi' 'em, gambled wi' 'em these twenty year either side the Great Lakes.

GAGNIER

But not very long in the valley of the Wisconsin. Yet you've settled long enough at Green Bay to know that all the Indians down here, both the Menomonee and the Dacotahs and the Winnebago, have been getting more and more suspicious and ugly for months. They are still friendly enough to the fur-traders, their old brothers of the rivers and the woods; still friendly enough to a quiet, simple, Frenchman like me, who is kind to them when they are hungry or sick. But they hate the Yankee Diggers at the Lead Mines, and they hate the Yankee Soldiers at the Forts, and they hate the Yankee Agency with its queer new business methods.

BAXTER

Weel, as a guid Scot and leal Briton, I canna say that I love the Yankee mysel'.

GAGNIER

The Yankee is now master in these parts.

BAXTER

[*With ominous significance.*] I wadna min'

a wee bit if the red lads expressed a different opinion.

GAGNIER

There would only be useless slaughter—blood of Winnebago and Yankee along the swamps and river-banks and through the woods, and a Yankee peace in the end. I've heard more troops, and some volunteers from the Lead Mines, are coming to Prairie du Chien.—Why *did* you tell them Blue Heron had been hanged?

BAXTER

Dinna be sae plaintive, mon. I hae said I wadna do it agen.

GAGNIER

We heard them yelling and wailing till long after we were out of the narrows. We ought to have gone back. Sometime your everlasting mischief and fun will get you into trouble.

BAXTER

Gane back?—And had to sing a' the lang nicht? And missed seein' Annette anither twal' hours!—Not for a' the Blue Herons in the fens

and a' the Red Birds in the woods. [*He kneels down by* ANNETTE.

GAGNIER

We would not have had to hurry so if you hadn't kept so long among the rocks at Devil's Lake.

MIGNON

O Monsieur Baxter, don't wake her now. You heard her crying last night. She hasn't been strong since she rolled into the river, la pauvre petite.

GAGNIER

Nonsense, Mignon. Her ducking in the river has harmed you more than it did our baby, Mignon.

BAXTER

O I ken babies—all babies cry in the nicht. Gie her plenty of milk—and corn-meal mush and oatmeal. And a little bread and jam, perhaps—but nae pickle. [*He picks up the flask.*] Your health, my bonnie bairn. Ye shall marry my Bobbie.

MIGNON

Merci, merci, Monsieur Baxter.

GAGNIER

Baxter, lay out the pans, please. Five, please.

[GAGNIER *pours the thickened sap into the moulds, refills the kettle from a tub nearby, and stirs, munching bread and cheese.* MIGNON *sits.*

GAGNIER

You are tired, Mignon. I should not have let you come way out here, Mignon.

MIGNON

Mais, François, I was afraid to stay in the cabin alone—toute seule, François. Sugar Loaf Bluff is so still when I am in the cabin alone and the long marsh is so still in spite of the blackbirds. Detroit was never so still—jamais.

BAXTER

Ye are richt, ye are!—Mignon—I'll ca' ye Mignon for the sake of auld Detroit—I wager I hae lifted leg in mair than ane jolly jig wi' ye

yonder in auld Detroit—years lang syne, lang syne.

MIGNON

Wouldn't that be funny, Mr. Baxter—très joli. I don't remember dancing with you. But it was never so still in Detroit, with the wagons rumbling and creaking by, and the French boatmen singing past the Captain's porch—jamais.

GAGNIER

Nonsense, Mignon. You've learned to handle the rifle as well as you've learned to make maple sugar. I was telling Baxter the story of the wash-kettle. I must tell him how you shot the timber-wolf.

MIGNON

[*Getting up restlessly.*] But you can't shoot the silence, François. It's the silence—the silence around the cabin, not the timber-wolf, or the bear, or the Indian. It makes me listen—listen. It makes me lay my hand to my breast—it makes me walk in the door and out the door—it makes me wake up Annette. Because I cannot see it,

and cannot hear it—only feel it, feel it everywhere—partout, partout. When it thunders, I am always better—or when I can hear the band way down by the Fort.

[Red Bird *and* Rabbit Mouth *enter suddenly and quietly. Each is in moccasins, girdle, and blanket, but otherwise naked.* Rabbit Mouth *has still the three eagle feathers in his hair and carries his gun, with pouch and powder-horn. They sit down a little beyond. Until near the end of the act,* Rabbit Mouth *squats in one position, silent and motionless, except for his eyes.*

GAGNIER

[*Who happens to be facing them.*] Red Bird! Did you drop down out of the northwind?

RED BIRD

We dropped down out of the northwind—from Rabbit Mouth's canoe.

GAGNIER

Your canoe is in the cove. Did you think I wouldn't get it back to you?

RED BIRD

No. I did not come for the canoe.

BAXTER

Weel, I'm glad to see ye're not in your war-paint.

RED BIRD

Why should I be in my war-paint?

BAXTER

My little joke about Blue Heron—I ought to—

RED BIRD

[*Rising.*] Your little joke! No! The Winnebago and the white men once hunted with different weapons, ate of different meat, drank of different drinks—no more—but they still laugh at different stories. That was not a joke to Red Bird.

GAGNIER

My friend here meant no—

BAXTER

[*Taking the lead and attempting to be ingratiatingly facetious.*] Ye hae come for the wee

lassie ye fished out of Mississippi Water? Ye canna ha' her. She's to be the squaw of my Bobbie.

MIGNON

O Red Bird, Red Bird! I shall remember forever.

RED BIRD

[*Sitting.*] We have come for fire-water. We have grown weak drinking of the cold spring out of the mossgrown rocks.

GAGNIER

The cold spring is better for the Winnebago.

RED BIRD

I have been to the cabin of John Lockwood—the bolt was across the door.

BAXTER

Maist Indians wad walked in and helped themsel', for down here, I hae heard, they bolt the door with a boiled carrot.

GAGNIER

Red Bird is not a thieving Indian, Baxter.

RED BIRD

No. I have been to the cabin of old Raoul—the door was open, but Raoul and his hired man were not there. So I have come to you.

MIGNON

Why did you not come to us first?

RED BIRD

I did not wish to come to you this time.

MIGNON

Because my man thinks too much fire-water not good for his red brothers?

RED BIRD

Yes.

MIGNON

Why didn't you beg for some at the Agency, or bring the mink-skin?

RED BIRD

And hear the Pale-Faces who lean about against the wall laugh, while the agent pours the brown milk on the ground, or counts the skins and gives

me a handful of red and yellow beads? I have enough beads,—so I have come to you. Mr. Gagnier, you will give Red Bird and Rabbit Mouth a drink of fire-water?

BAXTER

Weel, ye hae come a lang gate for a tipenny guzzle o' usquebae.

[*He gives the flask to* Red Bird. Red Bird *drinks and gives it to* Rabbit Mouth, *who guzzles long and deep.* Gagnier *takes it unobtrusively from* Rabbit Mouth *under protest.*

RED BIRD

But a drink with the maple sugar as you made it last time.

GAGNIER

I have nothing to mix it in, Red Bird.

RED BIRD

Mr. Gagnier, you are making the excuses of the men in blue and gold.

GAGNIER

We can't mix it in the flask, Red Bird.

BAXTER

[*To* Rabbit Mouth *who has picked up his gun.*] Ye wadna shoot my guid brither Gagnier, wad ye, for takin' the bottle awa' frae ye, wad ye?

RED BIRD

Give me your gun. [Red Bird *takes the gun and sets it on its stock with barrel against a tree.*

GAGNIER

[*Nervously cajoling.*] Rabbit Mouth, both of you wait till we all go back to the cabin.

RED BIRD

No. [*He picks up one of the empty pans.*

GAGNIER

Do, Red Bird, we'll go soon.

RED BIRD

No. Put the fire-water and the maple sugar in this. [*He gives the pan to* Mignon.

BAXTER

A persistent, resourceful red lad, at least when it's a matter o' a drink.

MIGNON

[*Preparing the drink with sugar from one of the fresh moulds, to* Red Bird.] Voila! Here, I have made it very sweet. [Rabbit Mouth *first and then* Red Bird *drinks from the pan.*

GAGNIER

I am glad you have come. I wanted to tell you about Blue Heron, Red Bird.

RED BIRD

Let us not speak of Blue Heron. [*He lays down the pan.*] I will never speak again of Blue Heron.

BAXTER

[*To* Rabbit Mouth, *who has his knife out.*] Ye wadna uncork a bottle wad ye, with that dirk's end, wad ye? Put your gully awa', wad ye min'?

MIGNON

[*To* Gagnier.] Mother of God, make that hideous fellow sit behind the child—he has the evil eye.

GAGNIER

Rabbit Mouth, the afternoon sun is getting into

your face. Sit over yonder! [*gesturing with the spoon.* RABBIT MOUTH *does not stir.* MIGNON *takes the baby into her lap, shielding its face with her hand.*] Over there, a little, Rabbit Mouth, I said.

[*As* RABBIT MOUTH *still sits motionless and silent,* GAGNIER *is taking the charm out of his pouch, and looking at it furtively.* RED BIRD *observes.*]

RED BIRD

I need another drink, Mrs. Gagnier.

MIGNON

You wouldn't make me leave my baby?

RED BIRD

I will mix it.

GAGNIER

No. [*He sets the flask behind him and speaks in a nervously wheedling voice.*] We'll all drink later at the cabin, Red Bird, and out of clean, shiny cups.

RED BIRD

Then let me see the charm—the finger of the good spirit.

GAGNIER

[*Trying to smother his agitation.*] No, again, Red Bird. It goes back into my medicine bundle here.

RED BIRD

[*To* BAXTER.] Then you will sing us a song now. [*He tries to indicate by the air.*] Sing us

"Settin' on a rail."

GAGNIER

[*Very nervous.*] Yes, do sing, Baxter.

BAXTER

At your service, Red Bird. [*Sings.*]

As I walked out by the light of the moon,
'Twas there I spied a big raccoon,
A-settin' on a rail!

[RED BIRD *has moved toward* GAGNIER, *but tries to appear intent upon the song.*

RED BIRD

Teach it to me.

BAXTER

Weel, let's see. [*Sings.*]

As I walked out by the light of the moon—

Try that.

RED BIRD

[*Trying.*]

As I walked out by the light of the moon—

BAXTER

Guid, that's guid, I say. [*Sings.*]

'Twas there I spied a big raccoon.

RED BIRD

[*Attempting to seem interested in the song, but now still nearer* GAGNIER *with a hand toward the pouch.*]

'Twas there I spied a big raccoon.

BAXTER

No. Pay attention. [*Sings.*]

'Twas there I spied—

RED BIRD

[*Singing.*]

'Twas there I spied—

BAXTER

[*Singing.*]

A big raccoon—

RED BIRD

[*Singing.*]

A big raccoon—

[*As* Red Bird's *knife is about to cut the pouch from the belt,* Gagnier *chances to step to the other side of the kettle.*

BAXTER

Awfu'! My warbling Red Bird, are ye drunk a'ready? Listen. [*Sings.*

A big raccoon.

RED BIRD

[*Excitedly.*

'Twas there I spied a big raccoon.

BAXTER

Better, I'm an auld han' wi' my tongue. I'll bring ye by it. [*Sings.*

A-settin' on a rail.

RED BIRD

[*Vehemently.*

A-settin' on a rail!

BAXTER

Guid! Guid! Ye sing the better for a little wet on your whustle. Noo, we'll a' sing. An' Gagnier, dinna be capernoity.

[GAGNIER *joins in;* MIGNON *and* RABBIT MOUTH *do not.* RED BIRD *tries again for the pouch, but* GAGNIER *is entering into the song and moving about, waving his ladle.*

As I walked out by the light of the moon,
'Twas there I spied a big raccoon,
A-settin' on a rail.

BAXTER

Agen, lads! And ye Mignon! [*But* MIGNON *does not sing—nor* RABBIT MOUTH.

As I walked out by the light of the moon,
'Twas there I spied a big raccoon,
A-settin' on a rail!

GAGNIER

[*Somewhat relieved.*] Baxter, you are always the life of the party—how do you do it? How *do* you do it, Baxter?

BAXTER

Weel, I'm nae a dead mon yet—and ye seem to ha' some life in yoursel', yoursel'.

MIGNON

[*To her baby.*] There—there—my darling—ma pauvre petite.

RED BIRD

Sing that last song—the one you sang from the canoe down the river.

BAXTER

My guid brither, nae this afternoon.

RED BIRD

Why not this afternoon?

BAXTER

I dinna care to hear ony caterwaulins and war-whoops—nae this afternoon.

RED BIRD

You won't hear any war-whoops this afternoon.

GAGNIER

[*Hurriedly interposing.*] Don't sing it, Baxter.

BAXTER

[*To* Red Bird.] Wull your glum-lookin' frien' over yonder keep sitting still?

RED BIRD

He will sit still. I have told him to sit still.

BAXTER

Weel, at your service.

[*Sings.*

They hanged him on the gallows,
Beside the silver sallows,
And the corbies are pecking out his eyne.
And the corbies are pecking out his eyne.

Noo, do ye ken what "sallows" and "corbies" are?

RED BIRD

No, what are "sallows" and "corbies"?

MIGNON

Eh, bien, you've waked Annette—there—there—dear. C'est moi—C'est la maman—sleep—sleep—dors bien—there—there—maman t'aime. [*She sings a French lullaby.*

Do, do, l'enfant do,
L'enfant dormira bien vite.
Do, do, l'enfant do,
L'enfant dormira bientôt.

RED BIRD

Won't your bone-charm make papoose sleep?

GAGNIER

Sometimes it will,—sometimes it depends on the moon.

RED BIRD

See if it will not make papoose sleep—let me hold it before her eyes.

GAGNIER

No, I will hold it.

MIGNON

Let Red Bird hold it,—do, François.

[GAGNIER *gives the charm somewhat dubiously to* RED BIRD *and returns to his kettle.* RED BIRD *clasps it tight, while* RABBIT MOUTH *watches intently. He leans over, holding it perpendicularly before the infant, intently shifting his glance sidewise from the bone to the people. The child grows quiet.*

GAGNIER

Baxter, a little more wood under here. Mignon, we forgot the bread and cheese for Red Bird and his silent brother. Rabbit Mouth, will you eat?

[MIGNON *lays the child down and kneels by the basket.* BAXTER *fetches wood from a pile of sticks, and kneels by the fire.*

RED BIRD

[*Watching the people.*] The finger-bone that charms the eyes to sleep—the finger-bone that

saves from the knife! [*He holds the charm aloft in signal to* RABBIT MOUTH.] The finger-bone of the good spirit!

[RABBIT MOUTH *leaps forward, seizing and stabbing and scalping* ANNETTE, *while* RED BIRD *springs and stabs* BAXTER *in the back where he kneels, and in another instant* GAGNIER *as he attempts to defend himself with the pewter spoon.*

GAGNIER

Red Bird! My wife! [*He falls dead.*]

[MIGNON *is seizing* RABBIT MOUTH'S *rifle from the tree and attacking the murderer of her baby.* RABBIT MOUTH *flees, with knife and scalp-lock, raising the war-whoop; and the mother pursues him beyond sight. A gunshot is heard, followed by the death-shriek of* RABBIT MOUTH, *and the mother's triumphant cry that vanishes away in a moan and a long wail.* RED BIRD, *alone, quickly takes the scalp-locks of the two dead men.*

RED BIRD

Two for one! Blue Heron had done the white

men no wrong. The white men killed Blue Heron. Two for one! These dead have done the Winnebago no wrong. But their faces are white. Red Bird has taken two for one!

[*He pauses.*]

To ease the pain at the Hill of the Dead!

[*He pauses.*]

To keep the law of the Winnebago!

[*He pauses.*]

The bands are waiting in war-paint at the Hill of the Dead.

[*He pauses.*]

Waiting for Red Bird's return to the Hill of the Dead.

[*He pauses.*

He looks down at BAXTER'S *body.*]

You will not laugh again at the Winnebago!

[*He looks down at* GAGNIER'S *body.*]

If your skin had only been red—red like the turning leaves. You should have been the brother of Red Bird. Why did the Great Spirit dip your face in the white—white—snow?

[*He picks up and drains the flask.*]

To ease the pain at the Hill of the Dead!

[*He pauses, as if dazed.*]

The pain—at the—Hill—of the Dead. . . .

[*He sees the body of* ANNETTE—*he reels back.*]

To keep the law of the Winnebago!

[*He reels and dances in wild exaltation.*]

Two for one! Two for one! Two for one! Two for one!

[*He pauses. Then*

[*Wildly.*] To keep the law of the Winnebago!

[*He calls, with his face to the sky.*]

Blue Heron! Blue Heron!

[*He rushes forth*

ACT III

Devil's Lake. The out-wash plain at the foot of the Lake of the Red-Mountain Shadows. The time when the corn is in the early blade.

An army tent in a wild grove at the southern end of the lake. Boulders. MAJOR WHISTLER, *a refined military type of about forty-five, clean-shaven, with a notebook, is seated on a campstool before a camp table. Another stool.* MR. M'KENNEY, *of about the same age, the Indian Commissioner from Washington, likewise clean-shaven, in the civilian costume of the period as modified for horse-back in the West, is walking up and down the shore, and stopping now and then to pick up a shell or a small stone. Some one in the camp behind the tent is aimlessly playing on a cornet a medley of national airs dominated by Yankee Doodle. By the tent stands young* SERGEANT JONES, *in an old uniform of the War of 1812, chewing tobacco.*

THE MAJOR

[*Closing his notebook, getting up, and looking back toward the regiment.*] Sergeant, go make that fool be still.

[SERGEANT *goes. Cat-calls of the soldiers against the musician, "the Major says quit your hornin'," "plug the bung-hole of your tooter." The music stops. Then a few phrases of Yankee Doodle ending, as if by intention, in saucy, ludicrous flats, as the* SERGEANT *returns.*

MAJOR

[*Good-naturedly, as* M'KENNEY *laughs.*] I'll give our bugler a week in the guardhouse for that.

M'KENNEY

[*Skipping a stone out across the water.*] What a fizzle!

MAJOR

A man's arm at our age isn't limber enough for that boy's game—not at least when he's half the year at a desk, like you.

M'KENNEY

You don't know my skill, Major. Watch this! [*He skips another stone.*] Zip! Five in a row and the sixth off like a rocket, and a bull-frog chug in the splash!

MAJOR

Prodigious! Could you have competed with the Father of our country? Washington once threw a silver dollar way across the Potomac, according to Parson Weems.

M'KENNEY

Probably not—I've none to throw away. [*He takes a seat on the stool.*]

MAJOR

A cigar, Mr. McKenney?—Oh, you don't smoke.

M'KENNEY

No, I never smoke.

MAJOR

Indian fighters have to smoke. What do you do when the peace-pipe goes around?

M'KENNEY

Oh, I just blow the smoke out like soap-bubbles —but I'm not strictly an Indian fighter, you know.

MAJOR

Sergeant, a bottle of champagne for the Commissioner.

[*The* SERGEANT *fetches a bottle from the tent and hands it to the* MAJOR.

MAJOR

You lummox, fetch a glass and pour as I've tried to show you.

[*The* SERGEANT *goes into the tent.*

M'KENNEY

Where did your lummox come from?

MAJOR

Oh, a grog-shop grocery down at Galena—we sometimes have to take what we can get.

M'KENNEY

Rather ungainly—for a Ganymede.

MAJOR

Commissioner, you'd do better to forget your classics when you come to Wisconsin.

[*The* SERGEANT *is emerging from the tent.*]

Yes, uncouth, but dependable, as far as I've observed. I gave him charge of Blue Heron in the guardhouse this spring.

[*The* SERGEANT *attempts as elegant a service as he can.*

M'KENNEY

A health to your regiment and the present enterprise.

MAJOR

Thank you, Commissioner. I hope it turns out as well as yours at Green Bay.

M'KENNEY

I think the Chippewa will remain quiet. But I've arranged to go back there for one more powwow, and I very much wish to have you with me.

MAJOR

Thank you. My getting off will depend, of

course, on the issue of this campaign. Curious that, just after you had come west this spring to straighten out affairs with the Chippewa up north, the Winnebago should have devised you such a brisk entertainment down here. But I have faith in Yankee Doodle.

M'KENNEY

I wonder if Yankee Doodle can lure Red Bird from his forest rendezvous up the river.

MAJOR

We shall know by sundown.

M'KENNEY

I wish he'd either come, or the sun would set. Major Whistler, doesn't it strike you as weird, the strains of Yankee Doodle out here among these primeval rocks?

MAJOR

In fewer years than it took Yankee Doodle to cross the Alleghenies, our soldiers will be hearing it beyond the Rocky Mountains.

M'KENNEY

I don't seem to be in America at all. Just

look at those enormous bluffs, furred along the ridges with the strips of wildwood, a tangle of fresh tints, lemon and green—though it's already early summer. It's uncanny, Major. Those pines grow up there as if they took their nourishment solely from the sky. And those fantastic shapes, split and piled one on the other, shining far up in the sun, when the great pool below is so dark. Why, it all seems like a landscape from the ages when the world was first being made.

MAJOR

I suppose it is still much as it was in the beginning.

M'KENNEY

[*Setting down his glass and rising.*] I can summon back the tormented angels of the creation. Listen! Hear how the echoes reverberate and wail away. [*He halloos, and the echoes reverberate and wail away.*

MAJOR

Demons fleeing in pain. No wonder the trappers call the place Devil's Lake.

M'KENNEY

The Winnebago call it the Lake of the Red-Mountain Shadows. I believe that has more poetry.

MAJOR

Business before poetry, Commissioner. There may be ugly work ahead of us tomorrow. I'm thinking of that. [*He takes out and begins unfolding a map.*

M'KENNEY

Well, I'm trying not to think of that.

MAJOR

If you're nervous, Commissioner, it's no compliment to me or my troopers.

M'KENNEY

Oh, it isn't any doubt as to our eventual victory. —It's merely tomorrow—tomorrow. The tomahawk or bullet in the skulls of our boys back there [*with a gesture toward the rear*] tomorrow—and the bayonet and the bullet in the bowels of the poor devils over by the Hill of the Dead.—Tomorrow.

MAJOR

I have wanted to avoid further bloodshed. Let the bands disperse. Let them surrender the murderer of Gagnier and the Englishman, and they shan't be punished for the conspiracy or the attack on the boat. They have my message.—Otherwise, we march to the Dalles of the Wisconsin tomorrow. [*The* BUGLER *plays a few notes of Yankee Doodle, and the* MAJOR *is looking at his map.*

M'KENNEY

[*Seating himself.*] A humane action indeed. If it succeeds, it will go down in history, a story and an example—that's the reason why I want it to succeed.

MAJOR

Humane—yes. I only hope not too humane. Even though we've driven their advance war-party back over hill and dale to their rendezvous in the Dalles yonder, like terror-stricken buffalo to the salt-licks, the tribe may still think us for this offer of mine a pack of cowards, and be emboldened to go on to worse things some other day. I am giving up the first opportunity the Govern-

ment ever had to clean up the Indians of Wisconsin once for all.

M'KENNEY

Wisconsin—Wisconsin—why we've borrowed the very name of the region from the Indians.

MAJOR

Oh, it's the old story of the settlement of Canaan. The United States is the chosen people.

M'KENNEY

Only that faith can justify us.

MAJOR

Only that faith makes me a military man. Band after band has been gathering from round about to the Hill of the Dead as if at the call of another Pontiac. Our foresight and dispatch has corraled them before the war-paint was dry on their cheek-bones.

M'KENNEY

Not our foresight—yours. Your control of the military situation has been masterly—if a civilian may venture a judgment.

MAJOR

I could exterminate them as Jackson did the Creeks and Seminoles. Pardon me, while I make a note or two on my map. [*Displaying it to* M'KENNEY, *who glances at it absently.*] What do you think of the craftmanship of our garrison-cartographer? [*A moment with his map;* M'KENNEY *is walking about.*] Sergeant, pour the Commissioner another glass.

M'KENNEY

No; no more, thank you.

MAJOR

[*After another moment with his notes.*] Set the things back in the tent.

[*The* SERGEANT *drains what is left in* M'KENNEY'S *glass, furtively behind the* MAJOR'S *back.*

MAJOR

[*Throwing away his cigar stump.*] Oh Sergeant, I believe I'll have a sip myself. [*The* SERGEANT *starts briskly to do the service ceremoniously.*] No, no! a clean glass, you sap-

head. [*The* SERGEANT *fetches a clean glass and pours.*] That's better—you'll learn—set the bottle back—and don't drink out of the nose.

SERGEANT

I *didn't* drink out of no nose. [*He claps his hand to his mouth.*

MAJOR

Any nose, *any* nose—and salute when you address me.

SERGEANT

[*Saluting.*] Aye, aye, sir.

MAJOR

Your health and a pleasant journey until you get back to Washington, Commissioner.

M'KENNEY

[*With a gesture of acknowledgment.*] Major, if they should interpret your offer as cowardice, is there not a chance they won't wait till some other day—or even till tomorrow?

MAJOR

You mean attempt tonight a surprise attack

upon us here at the lake? [*He gets up with map in hand.*] I don't think Chief Red Bird is quite such a fool. And they won't, if he says no. His old lost prestige that I had thought before this uprising we had won for the whites has been restored with his tribesmen—even greatly enhanced—by this single-handed exploit of his, so cunning and brazen, down at the Prairie.

M'KENNEY

They must all know, too, the strategic difficulty of surprising us within these bluffs.

MAJOR

A surprise attack is out of the question. Moreover, my offer reckons with two very special factors: the characteristic panic of all Indians when their hopes for the war path are suddenly dashed in the inaction of something like a siege—

M'KENNEY

And the second?

MAJOR

Red Bird's personal pride and fanatical tribal spirit—if he once realizes his people want him to give himself up.

M'KENNEY

You're as shrewd as you are energetic and humane, Major.

MAJOR

It remains to be seen, Commissioner. I must be cautious too—and *semper paratus*. That's all the Latin I remember from West Point, and about all I need to remember. It's infernally hard for a white man to fathom an Indian. If he acts on impulse, it's the impulse of a weasel, a wild hawk, or a rattlesnake. If he acts according to his code, his code is so involved with superstitions—with crazy taboos and fantastic mythology—that it simply bears no relation whatever to what we call manhood or moral principle.

M'KENNEY

I wonder if there are not a number of taboos, and perhaps some mythological fantasies, in our own code.

MAJOR

Perhaps. I'm a man of action, not a philosopher. It's the white man's code that the red man hereabouts has got to learn—the white man's law is the law of Wisconsin.

M'KENNEY

Let the white man respect it too.

MAJOR

It is for both.

M'KENNEY

Is it? When has either our civil or military arm ever dealt rigorously with the white exploiters of this bewildered and abandoned people?

MAJOR

I hope to better all that in Wisconsin.

M'KENNEY

I know and I thank you. But as United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs—that whole title belongs to me, Major [*with a laugh*]—I've come to feel the Indian question as the white man's hereditary curse, reaching beyond Wisconsin, and long before and, I fear, long after this revolt of Red Bird. It is not alone that the Indian has been dispossessed of his lands by the westward push of the pioneer; degraded by the white man's whiskey, and swept away by the white man's diseases—the small-pox among the Mandans, for in-

stance; no, deeper than this, he has been ruined in those very institutions and customs that made him a people by the so-called peaceful penetration of the white man's trade.

MAJOR

Yes, cheating the Indian has become a very dirty habit in the Republic—[*The* SERGEANT *spits.*]—like spitting tobacco-juice.

M'KENNEY

Oh, I don't refer to that at all here. I mean that when the white trader, French, English, or American, sent the Indian after the skins in return for copper kettles, iron hatchets, and glass beads, he not only made him a peon, but he undermined his native resourcefulness and his handicrafts; all but destroyed him too as a planter of fields, reduced him in great part to the stage of the primitive hunter—undid his whole world, in short. The Indian the white men despise is the Indian the white men have made.

MAJOR

[*Seating himself, with his map.*] The aborigine must go down before the bringers of civilization.

M'KENNEY

The aborigine—the aborigine—a word, not a solution, Major. For one, I am uncomfortable when I think how dear all these hills and streams have been for so long to creatures who at least eat and drink and sleep like ourselves. The very crags over yonder not a doubt but have their legends like the castle ruins on the Rhine, only older, far older. There [*pointing*] is a tepee of the Great Spirit. There [*pointing*] is a crag that looks like a gigantic tomahawk. I sometimes think each spot of earth belongs by the will of the Creator to those who have lived with it first and given it human meanings. [*He sits.*

[*The* SERGEANT *yawns and stretches, and bites off a quid from a plug of tobacco.*

MAJOR

You should return to Washington and your sentimental goose-quill, right soon. I believe Indian poems are getting to be the fashion back east,—at a safe distance, where the cigar-stores set up your noble red man in the splendor of wood and varnish.

[*The* SERGEANT *grins. Suddenly a rumpus*

some rods behind the tent. The SERGEANT *is interested but frightened. The* MAJOR *and the* COMMISSIONER *jump up and look back. Then the* MAJOR *steps off to investigate.*

M'KENNEY

Sergeant, did you ever fight Indians?

SERGEANT

Naw, your Honor. [*The yelling begins again.*] Be they comin' now, do you think? [*He tries to see for himself.*

M'KENNEY

Nonsense, no. And what could they do against two thousand troopers of the United States?

SERGEANT

By gosh, not much, I reckon. We'll feed their bellies with the long spoon. [*He spits tobacco-juice.*

M'KENNEY

What's the long spoon?

SERGEANT

What the Injuns calls the long knife.

M'KENNEY

You mean the bayonet?

SERGEANT

Yes, Mr. Commissioner. When the Injuns gits spunky, I believes in feedin' 'em with the long spoon.

M'KENNEY

Mm—mm—that's the popular doctrine.

SERGEANT

And your honor. . . .

M'KENNEY

Yes?

SERGEANT

Would ye min' tellin' me when you 'n' the Major'll be done talkin'?

MAJOR

[*Returning.*] Only some of our boys throwing dice with those crest-fallen Menomonee whom I commanded to be present if the surrender comes off.

M'KENNEY

The bringers of civilization haven't abolished gambling.

MAJOR

The boys are idle and aimless after such weeks of fighting and marching. The whole regiment is fidgety with suspense. Some are laying bets with the odds against Red Bird's giving himself up.

M'KENNEY

The wish is father to the thought. It's because they've already tasted blood, and want more—more.

[*Both are seated.*

MAJOR

[*Looking at the map.*] If march we must, it seems to be a scant fifteen miles as the crow flies —over rolling country—after we pass to the north of these crags.

M'KENNEY

Only fifteen miles?

MAJOR

As I estimate it—the country is fairly open—

the problem is where to cross the river. The Hill of the Dead is on the other side, you know.

M'KENNEY

No, I didn't. I'm only beginning to learn the geography of these regions.

MAJOR

We shorten the itinerary considerably by crossing below—but the river is much wider and still rather high. We can cross without difficulty a few miles above them, and though that route takes us into a hillier country, intersected too by marshy tributaries, it's the only one left.

M'KENNEY

And then—the slaughter.

MAJOR

[*Rising.*] No. I should still hope to avoid a repetition of our fierce efficiency down on the Mississippi.

M'KENNEY

How?

MAJOR

I'd repeat the offer at close range.

M'KENNEY

And still hope in Red Bird?

MAJOR

I wish I might still count on Red Bird's former pride in my personal approbation. But he discarded that when he discarded the treaty. A poor, deluded savage after all. Yet I can't but remember how magnificently he stood before me when he gave his word, with his crossed arms and his uplifted head. [*He imitates for an admiring instant* RED BIRD'S *characteristic pose.*] It was a scene out of knighthood.

M'KENNEY

Didn't the Menomonees tell you he thought you had broken the treaty—thought you had hanged Blue Heron?

MAJOR

It was my word against one of these Indian rumors that fly about in the forests—and he discarded my word. Besides I might have hanged

the old pot-belly and still not have broken the treaty. Reprisals were due for the killing of Methode and his boys.

M'KENNEY

Yes, the law of reprisals is self-perpetuating.

MAJOR

Well, I didn't hang him, did I? Pardon my irritation, Commissioner.

M'KENNEY

Pardon *me!* I was making a generalization beside the mark.

MAJOR

An extraordinary fellow, this Red Bird—sculptured as if by some ancient Greek artist out of the brown-red stone of these primeval bluffs of yours. I can never forget how magnificent he looked when he strode out of the river with Gagnier's infant—lithe, graceful, quietly triumphant as an Apollo Belvidere stained with walnut juice. And within a year he let his miserable companion butcher the child and had butchered the father himself—and in cold blood.

[*They both remain seated till others enter.*

M'KENNEY

Doubtless he thought he was obeying the voice of the Great Spirit of the Winnebago as Abraham was obeying Jehovah, the God of Israel, when he went up to the mountain to slay Isaac.

MAJOR

You've been reading Voltaire and those free-thinkers. You talk like Jefferson.

M'KENNEY

He was following the tribal code of the Lex Talionis. The phrase is Latin—the law was the law of our own ancestors in the Saxon fenlands.

MAJOR

Who worshiped heathen gods.

M'KENNEY

It was the old law of the Hebrews—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

MAJOR

Christ abrogated the old law.

M'KENNEY

Ah, but his followers have not. Did Crom-

well in Ireland? Did Frederick? Did Napoleon? An eye for an eye—or two for one, two for one. The Christian chieftains have called it reprisals or an indemnity. The heathen Red Bird calls it a scalp-lock.

MAJOR

But I say we hadn't killed Blue Heron—either eye or tooth.

M'KENNEY

Red Bird thought we had.

MAJOR

[*With irritation.*] Anyway, it makes no difference what he thought. None, whatsoever. Blue Heron, alive or dead,—the law of the Winnebago is not to be the law of Wisconsin.

M'KENNEY

[*As if starting to rise.*] Again, pardon me, Major Whistler.

MAJOR

Oh, never mind me, Commissioner. I suppose I'm pretty nervous myself.—That's plain, isn't

it? I want to deal with the Indians as human beings. But all Red Skins become devils on the warpath. Nowhere does history record such ferocious cruelty, such diabolical ingenuity and cunning, in every conceivable atrocity, when the war-frenzy has seized them.

M'KENNEY

The war-frenzy can make a raving Red Skin of many a white man. [*He takes a strip of tanned leather out of his jacket-pocket.*] Look at this, Major Whistler, this razor-strop—well-tanned, pliant.

MAJOR

I see it's a razor-strop.

M'KENNEY

I have four others like it in my tent.

MAJOR

Is your razor as dull as all that?

M'KENNEY

I'm not going to tell you a joke, Major Whistler. After the attack on the boat, when

your troopers so speedily began driving the Winnebago off into the marshes of their ancient home, there happened to be one old Indian with his four sons who had taken up a position behind a fallen willow. He stood there, I'm told, loading, as each of his boys fired. They all knew their day had come, but they would sell their lives at a good price. When the last fell dead, some of our men rushed up, yelling the war-whoop, scalped them in good Indian fashion, and then ran their knives down the length of the Indians' dusky backs in two parallel gashes. These are my five razor-strops.

MAJOR

Were they regulars—regulars of the army of the United States? [*He takes out his notebook.*] I shall want their names.

M'KENNEY

Not regulars, I'm glad for that much—volunteers from the Lead Mines.

MAJOR

Let me have their names.

[EAGLE BEAK, *in the costume of the long*

trail, enters by the lake-shore, and sits down silent upon the ground, as the two white men look. The SERGEANT *perks up.*

EAGLE BEAK

He will come.

MAJOR

Thank God. They will surrender Red Bird.

EAGLE BEAK

No.

MAJOR

What do you mean then—"He will come"?

EAGLE BEAK

He will come.

MAJOR

Come with his war-bands at his back, and you, as the white man's friend, are here to tell me?

EAGLE BEAK

No. He will come alone.

MAJOR

From the Hill of the Dead?

EAGLE BEAK

From the Hill of the Dead.

MAJOR

All alone?

EAGLE BEAK

All alone.

MAJOR

But they would not surrender him?

EAGLE BEAK

They would not.

MAJOR

How then?

EAGLE BEAK

He said he must come.

M'KENNEY

They let him go?

EAGLE BEAK

No. They said he should not go.

MAJOR

Tell your story, and make it short!

EAGLE BEAK

After the Council he went to his lodge in the firelight. He awakened me—and Yellow Cloud—at dawn. He had prepared his dress and his spirit in the night. He said, "Take the trail to the Lake of the Red-Mountain Shadows."

[YELLOW CLOUD, *in the costume of the long trail, enters by the lake-shore, and sits down silent, on a line with* EAGLE BEAK, *in the same posture some feet away.*

YELLOW CLOUD

He will come.

M'KENNEY

Soon?

YELLOW CLOUD

Very soon.

[*The White Men peer down the lake.*

M'KENNEY

In a canoe?

YELLOW CLOUD

No.

MAJOR

Along the shore-trail?

YELLOW CLOUD

The trail of Eagle Beak.

EAGLE BEAK

And the trail of Yellow Cloud.

MAJOR

Along the bluff?

YELLOW CLOUD

Yes.

M'KENNEY

Why not with you?

EAGLE BEAK

I said he would come alone.

M'KENNEY

It is already darkening in the valley.

EAGLE BEAK

But not on the heights.

MAJOR

Commissioner, our bugler blows for sunset, by the book—though it's only the farmer's almanac.

M'KENNEY

I see him! I see him!

MAJOR

Just where?

M'KENNEY

Here here, Major. [He adjusts WHISTLER's *position with a hand on his shoulder as he points.*] You see the crag two-thirds up—shaped like a monstrous champagne bottle with the nose broken? Above it the two dead pine-masts jutting up against the horizon?—The white object moving this way along the edge of the bluff!

MAJOR

Yes, yes! [*He adjusts his field glasses.*] It must be Red Bird!

EAGLE BEAK

It is Red Bird.

M'KENNEY

[*Adjusting his field-glasses.*] Now he's lost in the shrubs and trees. There—how he strides along, like a hunter home to his bride. Now he's gone again. Watch for him below where the wood opens.

[*A pause.*

MAJOR

He is all in white.

M'KENNEY

White as a barbaric priest marching to perform his sacrifice to the Sun-God.—No—not all in white. I see red flashing every now and then through the green leaves.

MAJOR

He has the white flag high over his head on a

pole in his right hand. What is that he holds in his left?

M'KENNEY

I can't make it out, either.

MAJOR

Magnificent! How he leaps along where the trail descends to the creek.

M'KENNEY

Like a panther.

MAJOR

He's lifting the great white flag—how high he lifts it! He sees the troops. [*A monotone chant in the distance. The troops begin to hurrah.*] He's singing the death-song. Sergeant, bring up the Menomonees. [*He indicates a position just off-stage.*] The band is to line up over there [*indicating the exact position off-stage*]. Remind them, they are to strike up Pleyel's hymn—understand, Pleyel's hymn—just after I speak. And you are to stand by the tent.

[*The* SERGEANT *goes. The two men look again through their field-glasses. They*

remove their field-glasses from their faces. They stand long at gaze. The chanting grows louder and nearer. The two Indians, old EAGLE BEAK *and young* YELLOW CLOUD, *heads lowered to their knees, sit like stone creatures before a gate. The* SERGEANT *comes back. The* STANDARD BEARER *enters with the colors on a staff, and stands as if some paces in front of the band.* RED BIRD, *chanting the death-song, enters between* EAGLE BEAK *and* YELLOW CLOUD. *He pauses, when a step or two in front of them. With head erect, as if seeing no man, he takes up the chant once more.*

I must die, I must die,
But willingly I fall.
They can take from me but one life.
I have taken two from them.
Two for one, two for one. . .

[*All faces are fixed upon him. His shirt is dressed elk-skin, white, cut to a fringe at the bottom, with sleeves slit and fringed, through which his bronze arms show. His leggins are of dressed elk-skin,*

white, fringed on the seams and ornamented with blue-stained bits of river-shells along the fringe. He wears moccasins of dressed elk-skin, white, with red and blue bead-work. A scarlet cloth, about a half-yard in width, fitted round his neck like a poncho, lies on his upper breast and back. Over the scarlet cloth is a collar of blue wampum, beautifully mixed with white, from the lower rim of which dangle polished panther claws, strung close together. On one shoulder, toward the breast, is an ornamented eagle feather, nearly white; on the other shoulder, an eagle feather nearly black. Diagonally across his breast is bound his long-stemmed war-pipe, bright with dyed horse-hair and the feathers and beaks of birds. On either cheek are two delicately painted upright markings, like crescents of pale green. His hair is short and black, and unadorned. In his left hand he steadies upon the ground the pole with the white flag; in the other he holds somewhat forwards from his side the peace-pipe. The chant ceases. RED BIRD *and* MAJOR

WHISTLER, *Red Man and White Man, stand facing each other.*

RED BIRD

[*With head at first lifted, then bowed as he speaks.*] Strike; I am ready.

MAJOR

We meet again. Raise your head. I shall not strike.

[*The Band plays Pleyel's hymn. The pensive music writes itself on* RED BIRD'S *countenance, as he looks slowly about him. The band ceases. Silence.*

MAJOR

Sit down, Red Bird.

[RED BIRD *sits, letting the flag of truce sink on the ground beside him. He lifts up his gay, barbaric otter-pouch, takes out tobacco, rubs between his palms, strikes fire into a bit of spunk with his flint and steel, lights and smokes. At this moment the* BUGLER *off-stage blows upon the cornet, and the* STANDARD-BEARER *dips the flag.*

MAJOR

That is the song of the sunset. You have come at sunset. You did well to come. I would spare your people. May your people learn the power and the justice of the white men. [*He includes* EAGLE BEAK *in his address.*] But let them not do wickedness again. If they suffer any wrong from the white man, let them go to the Agent at Prairie du Chien, who will tell the Great White Father in Washington. He will right their wrongs. [*He includes* EAGLE BEAK *and* YELLOW CLOUD *in his address.*] There is only one law in Wisconsin, the White Man's Law; but it deals the same justice to the Red Man as to the White. . . . Stand up, Red Bird.

RED BIRD

[*Standing up, with his pipe in his hand, and at times crossing his wrists and arms below his chest, in characteristic pose, and looking now at* MAJOR WHISTLER, *now "through a hole in the sky."*] I have come. I fulfilled the law of the Winnebago when I sacrificed the lives of the white men. I fulfill the law of the Winnebago when I sacrifice my life to the white men. It may be that I have come in vain. It may be that you will not

spare my people, though I have come. But you would not have spared them had I not come—and I have come. You have spoken to Red Bird as a father to his children. So have the white chiefs spoken forever to the Indian. But the Indian has seen his sacred burial-places plowed into corn fields, his old women jeered at, his young women made to feed the white man's lust, his little children burned alive in the flames of the Indian's house. He has seen the braves shot down like dogs for stealing the chickens and the pigs of the white men of the settlements, because they were hungry and the white men had taken from them their right to hunt and fish and plant in their old homes. He has seen the white men steal his broad lands, his quarries, his forests, and his water-courses, by what the white men call a deed of sale. He has seen the old men flattered into silence or foolishness by the white man's toys. You say there is one law both for the White Man and for the Indian. But when the Long-Knives come and slay the Indians, they call it a victory; when the Indians come and slay the Long-Knives, they call it a massacre. Yet you, I believe, are a man. If you had been Red Bird, you would have led your people as Red Bird has led them. But it was—

too late. The white men are too strong—I have come.

MAJOR

You have saved your people.

M'KENNEY

And our people.

RED BIRD

[*Advancing a step or two.*] This [*with a gesture over his raiment*] is the whiteness of my spirit. This [*with a hand to his scarlet cloth*] is the blood I have shed. This [*with a hand to the pipe*] is the war-pipe, bound to my breast, which I shall smoke no more. I have given my life away—it is gone [*stooping and taking dust between finger and thumb and blowing it off*] like that [*eyeing the dust as it vanishes*]. I would not take it back—it is gone. [RED BIRD *clasps his hands behind him and marches briskly up to* MAJOR WHISTLER, *breast to breast.*

MAJOR

Red Bird, your life is not mine to take. I shall deliver you over to the law of Wisconsin. You

shall appear before District Judge Doty at the Prairie. You shall be tried as a man, not slain as a captive. [*He goes over to give private instructions to the* SERGEANT *who disappears into the tent, returning with a pair of handcuffs.*

RED BIRD

I wish to die as a captive, like my ancestors.

MAJOR

No. Those days are gone. You shall be treated well; but, after your word at the Grand Council last year—now broken—you must hold out your hands. [*The* SERGEANT *gives him the handcuffs.*] But you are a chief, and only a chief shall bind you.

RED BIRD

[*Proudly.*] I do not wish to be put in irons. Let me be free.

M'KENNEY

Major, must you put him in irons?

MAJOR

As a man I would not; as a soldier and officer of the Republic I must.

RED BIRD

[*Broken.*] Do not put me in irons.

MAJOR

[*To* Red Bird.] It is the law of Wisconsin. [Major Whistler *adjusts the irons, then steps aside, looking beyond to the rear of the tent. Calling to the regiment.*] He is to pass behind the lines. [*To the* Sergeant.] Lead him through. [*Shouting and hurrahs from the soldiers, which are checked by the* Major's *lifted right hand.*

M'KENNEY

With your permission, Major, I'll go with them. [*As the three are about to depart,* Red Bird *half turns toward the lake and the bluffs, with the* Sergeant *yanking him.*] Just a moment, Sergeant. [M'Kenney *lets him gaze, checking the* Sergeant's *interference.* Red Bird *stands in characteristic pose, with manacled wrists crossed below his chest. Then he raises his hands with the peace-pipe.*

RED BIRD

The great stone tomahawk! The dream! The dream. [RED BIRD, *then, himself makes the first move to go. The band plays the opening strains of the Star-Spangled Banner.*

ACT IV

Fort Crawford. A room in the guardhouse of the barracks at Prairie du Chien. The time when the corn is in the tassel.

A barren room, with rather high ceiling of heavy beams, a large fire-place and hearth of rough stone, and an oak-door to one side opposite which is an oblong window, cross-barred and set high. Underneath the window a low pallet of wood with straw and blanket. An Indian pipe on the floor near the pallet. An old oaken bucket. RED BIRD *is pacing weakly back and forth and round the walls, with his hands still in manacles, emaciated but still clad in the white costume of his surrender. He clambers slowly up on the bed and tries to peer out over the sill of the barred window. He sits down, looking vacantly at his chained hands. He picks up his pipe, the peace-pipe of his surrender. He fills it and lights it with difficulty. He smokes—and he smokes—motionlessly.*

The only life in the room is the curling of the fumes into the sunlight. Then the sound of the unbolting of the door from the outside. RED BIRD *hears and watches eagerly. It is the* GUARD *who enters.* RED BIRD *drops his head. The* SERGEANT *is dressed in the same old uniform and in a little brief authority. He carries in one hand a bowl of stew. He lays his rifle against the door-post and stands, scowling at* RED BIRD.

SERGEANT

Red Bird, stand up!

[RED BIRD *sits motionless.*

SERGEANT

Stand up, I say!

[RED BIRD *rises mechanically.*

SERGEANT

Give me the salute!

[RED BIRD *salutes with both hands to his right temple.*

SERGEANT

Sit down!

[RED BIRD *sits down.*

SERGEANT

It's about time I learned you respect for an American soldier and officer. [RED BIRD *is silent.*] Answer me! [RED BIRD *is silent.*] Answer me! I don't want to knock your trotters from under you with my gunstock, do I? I don't want to tuck you up for a floggin', do I? [RED BIRD *is silent. The* SERGEANT *takes a bite from his plug.*] Speak, I say!

RED BIRD

Speak?

SERGEANT

Say "Yes, sir."

RED BIRD

Kill me.

SERGEANT

That's the hangman's job—see? You eat this here stew. You've fed ever sence the trial mostly on terbacky smoke. Come, stand up to your rack.

RED BIRD

You cannot make me eat it. You can kill me but you cannot make me eat.

SERGEANT

There ain't agoin' to be no more "cannots" to me. Major Whistler and Mr. M'Kenney has jest came back from their last pow-wow with them Chippewa friends o' yourn up at Green Bay. Before they went to Fort Howard they orders me to treat you decent. I won't take no chances of their sayin' I starved you to death—see? [*He tries awkwardly a different tack.*] Be a man—eat!

RED BIRD

Be a man? Do you think I'm a squaw sulking in the wigwam after a beating? My throat is shut. I cannot eat.

SERGEANT

[*Cajoling, with self-importance.*] You jes' smell it. Your nose will pry open your throat.

RED BIRD

I have given my life away. I would not take it back.

SERGEANT

See—hot from the officers' mess, hot from the big pot in the kitchen—hot as fresh mustard to a sore shin.

RED BIRD

Take it back and set it before the men in blue and gold.

SERGEANT

Come,—no cold slops, this here, no hogwash for beggin' Red Skins at the Agency. A feast for a big chief!

RED BIRD

Why does the white father want to feed the dead?

SERGEANT

They shan't say I didn't treat you decent. Listen to me—I'll tell ye somethin'—will you eat?

RED BIRD

[*Feebly, but eagerly.*] You say the white father has returned to the Fort. They will take me out soon—kill me soon?

SERGEANT

Naw, no sech luck as that. [RED BIRD *looks at him.*] But if you'll eat, I'll unbuckle them there irons.

RED BIRD

[*Rousing himself.*] Take off the irons?—Set me free?—Not put them on again?

SERGEANT

I won't put 'em on agin so long as you eat your meals.

RED BIRD

I will eat. [*He holds up his hands, as the* SERGEANT *sets the bowl on the floor.*

SERGEANT

Naw, wait! You jes' give me your word fust not to tell the Major that I kep' the irons on while they was away.

RED BIRD

Off!—now—now! I give my word. Set me free, now—now!

SERGEANT

[*Removing the irons and letting them clink and clatter to the floor.*] You ain't goin' to tell no white father I kep' you in irons—understan'? I was jes' tryin' to discipline you—understan'?

An' it's my job to stan' guard on you, not the Major's—understan'?

RED BIRD

I will eat—I will eat.

SERGEANT

You understan'?

RED BIRD

I am free! Red Bird is free! [*He reaches for the bowl. He tries to gulp the stew. He cannot. The coarse crockery falls from his hands and rolls on the floor.*] I cannot eat,—but leave me free—free! You said the white father did not want to keep me in irons.

SERGEANT

I didn't say that!—You hear, I didn't say that. If you won't say I didn't say that, I won't leave 'em off.

RED BIRD

I do not know what you said. Leave them off —now—now. I will not tell the white father.

SERGEANT

Then I'll leave 'em off. I'm treatin' you decent. [RED BIRD *totters up to his full length on the pallet and tries, with the help of his freed hands, to peer over the sill of the window, while* SERGEANT *picks up the bowl and the handcuffs.*

SERGEANT

Git down. You're too wobbly. Git down from the winder.

RED BIRD

I must see the Big Sky.

SERGEANT

Git down, I say. You can see it from the floor. I can see a piece of it here.

RED BIRD

I must see it all.

SERGEANT

If you'll eat today, tomorrow you'll be strong enough to see all the big sky you want—you hear that?

RED BIRD

I must see the Big River.

SERGEANT

An' I'm tellin' you, if yu'd rip some o' them fancy Injun trappin's off'n your collar-bone, an' all them Injun pantaloons off'n your bum an' your shins, perhaps yu'd be a little sprier at the winder.

RED BIRD

The white father said I might die in this Indian dress.

SERGEANT

Well, you *might*, all right. [He *spits tobacco-juice.*]

RED BIRD

I must see the Big River. [*He tries to pull himself up. He collapses on the pallet.*] The Big River will flow forever. Why do they not put the rope around my neck? Why have they kept me from the Spirits in the Big Sky and from the Spirits in the Big River? Sun after sun, ever since the Judge said I was to have the rope around my neck—day after day—and I sit and see the

shadow-squares of the window-bars creep across the floor [*with finger moving*] from left to right —from that crack to that—and now it's from that to that. And the corn is long since in the tassel —the corn is in the tassel.

SERGEANT

Look a-here. I'll leave you take a squint at your Big River. Understan', I'll give you *my permission*. I'm treatin' you decent—understan'? You may be a cut-throat, but I'm treatin' you decent.

RED BIRD

I am not a cut-throat.

SERGEANT

Jest a little too handy with the knife around the ears—eh? Want me to show you the Big River?

RED BIRD

I must see the Big River.

SERGEANT

Well, after about five minutes of Sergeant

Jones' valuable time yu'll have your squint. —Yu'll tell the Major I let you look—see?

[*The* SERGEANT *picks up handcuffs and bowl and goes out, inadvertently leaving his gun.* RED BIRD, *from the edge of his pallet, observes it with an instant's gleam on his face. The gleam fades into a vacant stare, long-continued. He then walks over and lifts it to his shoulder, aiming this way and that, with some faltering steps and crouching, peering motions that are all like a shadowy memory of the hunt or the battle in the forest. He sinks to the floor in his weakness near the centre of the barren room and examines the fire-arm with bewilderment.*

RED BIRD

[*To himself.*] Not like mine—where is the flint?—Never saw one like this before—so much lighter than mine—barrel so much shorter. [*He lies at full length, again aiming this way and that. As he chances to bring the sight to bear on the door the* SERGEANT *comes back with an empty box. He drops it, frightened, in the doorway.*

RED BIRD

I was not going to shoot you—take it.

SERGEANT

[*Snatching it.*] By the great horn-spoon, I clean forgot my bran' new patent killin' piece, Uncle Sam's latest contraption. I'll be forgettin' my self-possession next. [*He is startled by a sudden idea.*] See here—if I'd forgotten to bolt the door, 'ud you of run away—cut out fer the woods?

RED BIRD

[*Raising himself unsteadily to his feet.*] No. I gave my word to save my people. I am not an old woman. I would not have run away. [*He turns and walks toward the pallet.*

SERGEANT

You mean your legs are too shaky. And say, why didn't you blow yer brains out, when you had the chance?

RED BIRD

I gave my life to Major Whistler.

SERGEANT

Ye mean ye couldn't manipillate that there new-fangled gun. [*He adjusts the box under the window on the pallet.*] This held what was left of the Major's champagne. I guess it'll hold what's left o' you. [RED BIRD *totters up, steadied by his hands on the wall and sill, and by the Guard at his back.*] There—take your last good squint at the Mississippi, the Injun's famous father o' waters. [RED BIRD *peers long up stream and he peers long down stream; then suddenly he cries out in horror.*

SERGEANT

Gawd! What the devil's bitin' you now?

RED BIRD

He is there! He is there!

SERGEANT

Git down!

RED BIRD

There! Launching his canoe—on the father of waters—going down the Big River to the mouth of the Wisconsin.

SERGEANT

Git down! You've got 'em! Git down!

RED BIRD

To the mouth of the Wisconsin—back up the Wisconsin—back to the Hill of the Dead! But the rope, the rope is not around his neck!

SERGEANT

[*Panicky.*] Git down! You're a sick Injun, you are, you are!

RED BIRD

[*Collapsing onto the pallet and the box.*] The spirit! The spirit!

SERGEANT

You've seed a spook—a water spook? That comes from not eatin'. I'll fetch some more stew. You mus' take your feed.

RED BIRD

The spirit is out there—on the river—beyond the walls—beyond the walls!

SERGEANT

People what don't eat mus' expec' to see queer

after a time. Any trapper who's been lost in the desert can whisper you that. And they say your own hootin' Medicine Men sees visions too when they leaves off eatin' a spell—heap big Injun spooks like yourn.

RED BIRD

The spirit! The spirit of Blue Heron! The spirit of Blue Heron!

SERGEANT

The sperit of Blue Heron? That was the Injun I kep' house with here this spring,—not so damned onery and sulky and crazy as you be. Well, he warn't no sperit the last time he was back here beggin' me for a ladleful o' this same mash you stick up your nose at—only yesterday.

RED BIRD

[*Trying to sit up.*] Why do you torture my ears with your tongue as you tortured my heart with your irons? Blue Heron is dead. [*Dreamy, dazed.*] And why must I wait—wait—night after night, when the summer moon comes through the bars—ever since the white judge said, "It is the law of Wisconsin that you die on the gallows"?

SERGEANT

Hell and blazes! Does it torture you because I said Blue Heron asked me for stew yesterday?

RED BIRD

They hanged Blue Heron.

SERGEANT

The hell they did! You're out o' your head, agin. You must eat,—Gawd damn it, they did *not* hang him, I say.

RED BIRD

[*Sitting up feebly.*] The white man, Mr. Gagnier's friend, said they hanged Blue Heron. Three times he said it.

SERGEANT

The man you stuck your damnation dirk into?

RED BIRD

The man I killed.

SERGEANT

It ain't healthy to believe all you hear in these here parts. He either picked up some fool yarn,

or he lied like a damned Englishman—or you're ravin' agin.

RED BIRD

Who must I believe—him or you? The white father did not hang Blue Heron?

SERGEANT

On my word as an officer, Blue Heron waddled through that there door, like a corn-fed duck, fat as a pumpkin. He went down past the flag-pole and the flag, chipper as the chesty larks around him. I reckon it warn't but little afore the time you stirred up them yellin' Winnebago o' yourn to slap on the war-paint.

RED BIRD

[*Standing up feebly.*] That was Blue Heron I saw—not the spirit?

SERGEANT

[*Drawing the blanket of the pallet over the box.*] You dunder-headed Injun, if you saw Blue Heron out there, you saw Blue Heron. My ears for a heel-tap, it was Blue Heron. He seems to kinder hitch to the life 'round here—couldn't

forgit Uncle Sam's horspitality—an' he's been loungin' 'round ever sence. That was probably him at the river, but I bet he warn't going back to no Hill of no Dead.

RED BIRD

So they never hanged Blue Heron. [*He collapses on pallet and box and breaks into a low, strange wail.*] Wah!—wah!—wah!

SERGEANT

Ask Major Whistler, ask Mr. McKenney when they visits you. They be back from them Chippewa-wa's and they'll soon tend to your wa-wa's. Ask the hangman hisself when he comes—he'd ought o' know, if I don't. They let him go, takin' a long chance on nabbin' Rabbit Mouth—but that varmit died, he did, by the hand of a woman, with his own bullets in his guts.

RED BIRD

It may not have been his spirit—there was no rope around his neck.

SERGEANT

Naw, but a yaller string with a tin-medal for good behavior.

RED BIRD

[*To himself.*] Two for one—the law of the Winnebago—I killed my white brother because the white men had killed Blue Heron—and they did not kill Blue Heron.

SERGEANT

It *do* seem like the devil of a mistake.

RED BIRD

[*To himself.*] Two for one—the law of the Winnebago—but I killed the man who said they had killed Blue Heron. I killed the man who made me kill my white brother! [*He lies down on the pallet, on his side, with broken eyes staring into the room.*

SERGEANT

He made you kill him, did he? Well, I ain't the judge. You had ought o' told Judge Doty he made you. He might of let you off. He might of hanged Baxter, if he warn't killed too. I disremember of Mrs. Gagnier, the widder, at the trial sayin's as how anybody made you kill her man. An' you jes' stood there like any hitchin'-post [*mocking with his poses and tone*]

with your chained hands crossed over your Injun belly, lookin' up through a hole by the rafters, an' said, "Red Bird killed Gagnier and Baxter."

RED BIRD

[*With little breath in his body.*] What—was the—trial—for? I don't—understand—the white man's ways—I had—given myself up—a sacrifice—for my people—I expected—to die. There was nothing more—for Red Bird—to say.

SERGEANT

Naw, you don't understan' the white man's ways—that's why it's bad times for *you*. And I don't pertend to understan' *yourn*. I can't cut and shuffle with Injuns at all, exceptin' they's a grinnin' good-natered feeder, pitchin' pennies here, like Blue Heron.

RED BIRD

[*In hoarse whispers.*] Two for one—two for one—The law of the Winne—ba—go. Two—for—one.

SERGEANT

Two for one, or two for *none*. But you cer-

tainly done some greasy low-down Injun killin'.

[RED BIRD *plucks out the now soiled and frayed eagle feathers from his shoulders.*

RED BIRD

They—are—not—mine.

[*He rolls over with his face to the wall. Pause.* MAJOR WHISTLER *and* COMMISSIONER M'KENNEY *enter. The* SERGEANT *salutes unctuously.*

MAJOR

Sergeant, how is your prisoner?

SERGEANT

I can't make him eat or do nothin',—anything I tell him to. He ain't perked up like Blue Heron at all.

MAJOR

No, Red Bird is a very different sort from Blue Heron. [*To* RED BIRD.] Red Bird, stand up. [RED BIRD *does not move.*] Is he asleep?

SERGEANT

Probably jest all caved in. He hardly never

sleeps no more—anymore—I reckon. Jest lays aroun', walks aroun', sets aroun', smokes aroun', looks out at the winder round and roun',—been that way ever sence you and the Commissioner went up to Fort Howard at Green Bay the day o' the trial. I've treated him decent as he'd let me.

MAJOR

You took off the irons at once?

SERGEANT

[*Saluting.*] After you told me to, sir.

MAJOR

Red Bird, I think I have something here that will *make* you stand up. [*He holds up an open letter.*] It came two weeks ago to Prairie du Chien in the boat up the Big River. I find it here at my return today from Fort Howard. It is a message to me from President Adams, the Great White Father at Washington, and it says—do you hear, Red Bird?—it says, "Remit the sentence of Red Bird; let Red Bird go free." You may thank Mr. M'Kenney for this. Sergeant, open the door. [*The* SERGEANT *opens the door, and stands at attention.* RED BIRD *does not move.*

MAJOR

[*Going over to* Red Bird; *laying his hand on the shoulder of* Red Bird.] Do you not hear? [*He shakes him gently.*] You have been pardoned. The door is open to the trail, and the trail is open to the Hill of the Dead. [Red Bird *does not move.*] M'Kenney, come here—you have some medical knowledge. What's the matter with him? [*He feels of the body and turns the face toward him.*] God, but he's thin!

M'KENNEY

Open your eyes—let me see the whites. [Red Bird *cannot open his eyes.*] Hold out your tongue, Red Bird; it's Mr. M'Kenney. [Red Bird *cannot hold out his tongue.* M'Kenney *feels his pulse and lays his ear to the heart.*] Major, he has already taken the home trail.

MAJOR

Is Red Bird dead?

M'KENNEY

Yes.

SERGEANT

Well, they say there ain't no good Injun but a dead Injun.

MAJOR

Shut up, I say. Speak when you're spoken to. Go!—And report yourself at my office.

SERGEANT

[*Saluting, softly.*] Beg pardon, sir. [*He goes.*

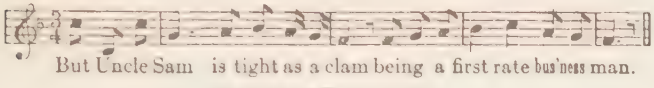
[*The* MAJOR *removes his military hat, and paces, looking absently about the barren room, while the* COMMISSIONER *still stands over the dead body of* RED BIRD. *Then, chancing to notice the box, the* MAJOR *throws back the blanket in an idle, preoccupied manner and speaks in an artificially matter-of-fact voice.*

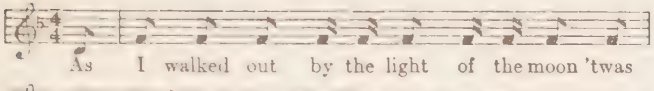
MAJOR

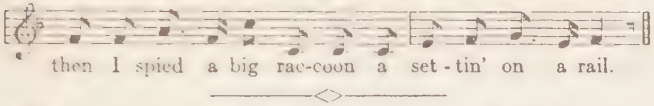
I wonder what my champagne case is doing here in the guardhouse?

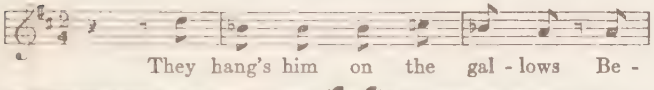
NOTE ON THE MUSIC SNATCHES.

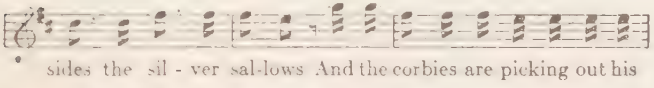
The music to "Auld Lang Syne" and "Under the Greenwood Tree" of course needs no reference, and "Pleyel's Hymn" is still reprinted in the more comprehensive Protestant Hymnals. For the snatches I am indebted to a friend, the "Raccoon Song" being scored from my own boyhood memories of a lyric country-side.

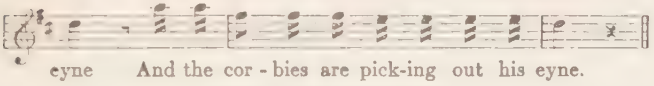


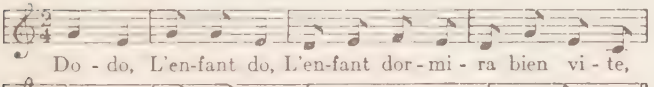


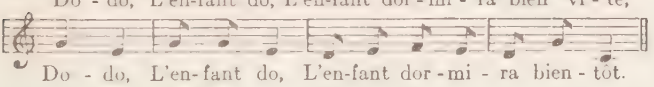


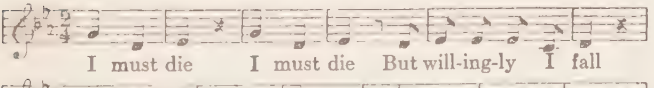


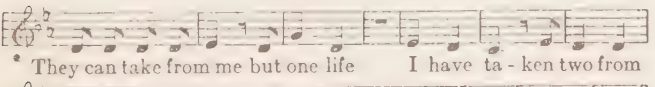


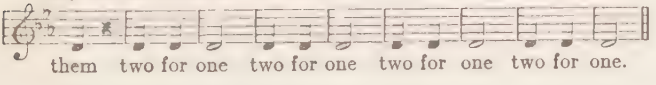












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PS 3523 .E62 R4 1923
Leonard, William Ellery,
1876-1944.
Red Bird

[redacted]

GENERAL LOAN COLLECTION

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Lost and Injured Books.—Borrowers are held responsible for books and are required to pay for lost and injured volumes. Number of pieces loaned is given on notification postal and borrowers are held responsible for this number unless notice of shortage or error is sent immediately upon receipt of package.

Books must be kept clean, must not be marked and corners of leaves must not be turned down.

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